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BOGUS SOCIAL WORKERS WHO'S THAT ON THE DOORSTEP?

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ForteanTimes

FT321 DECEMBER 2014 £4.25

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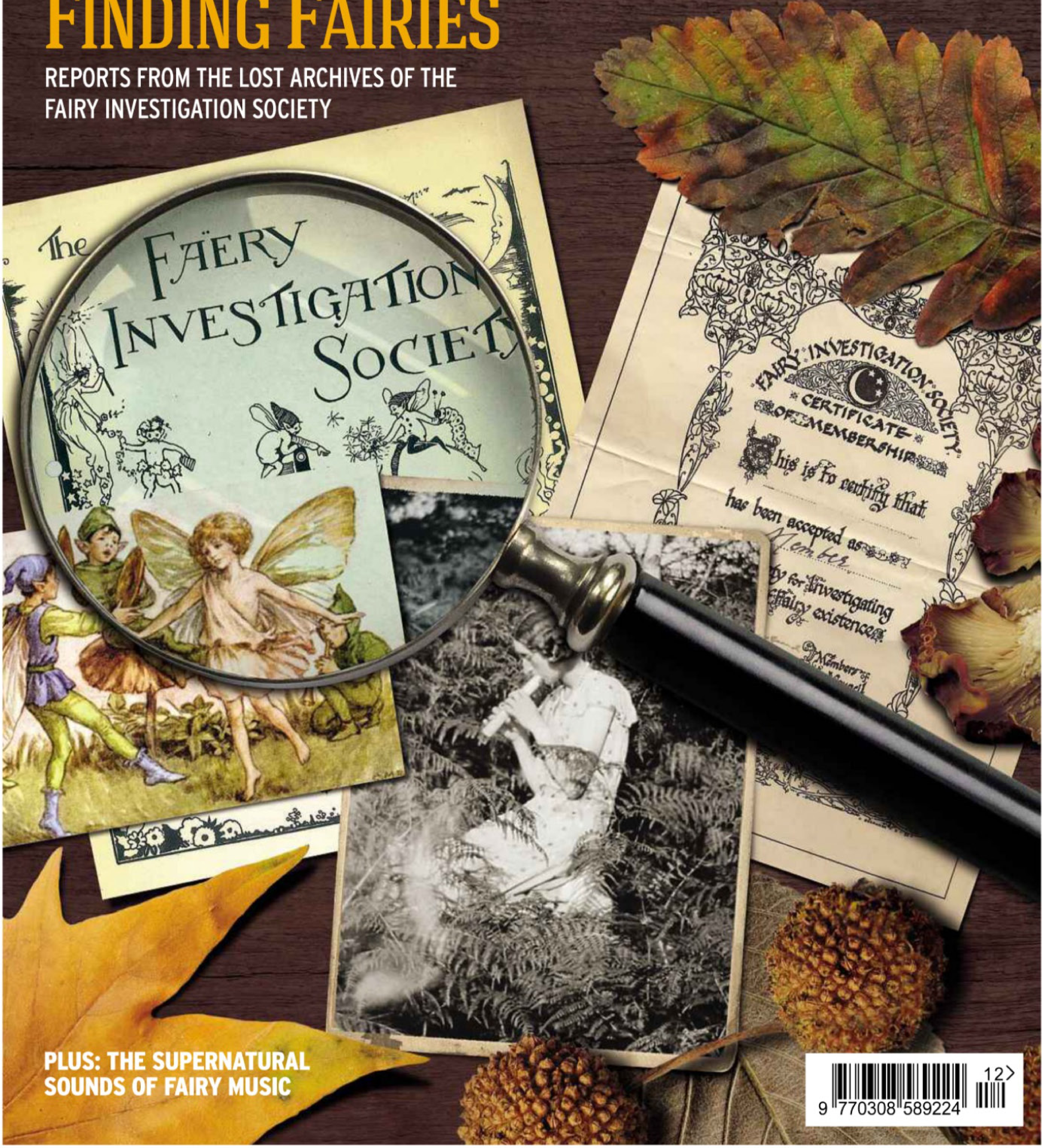
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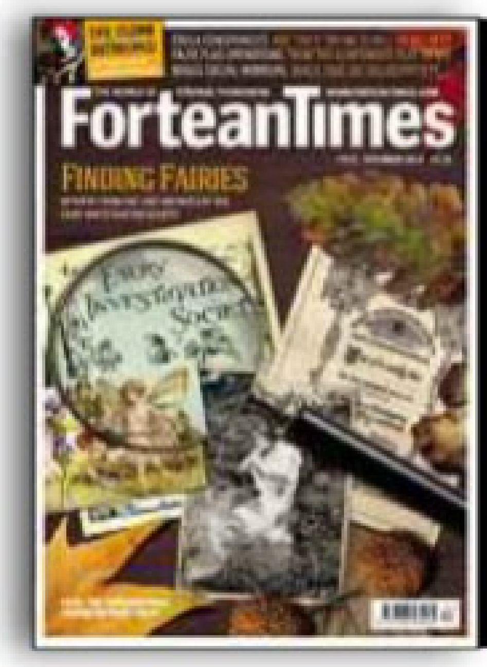

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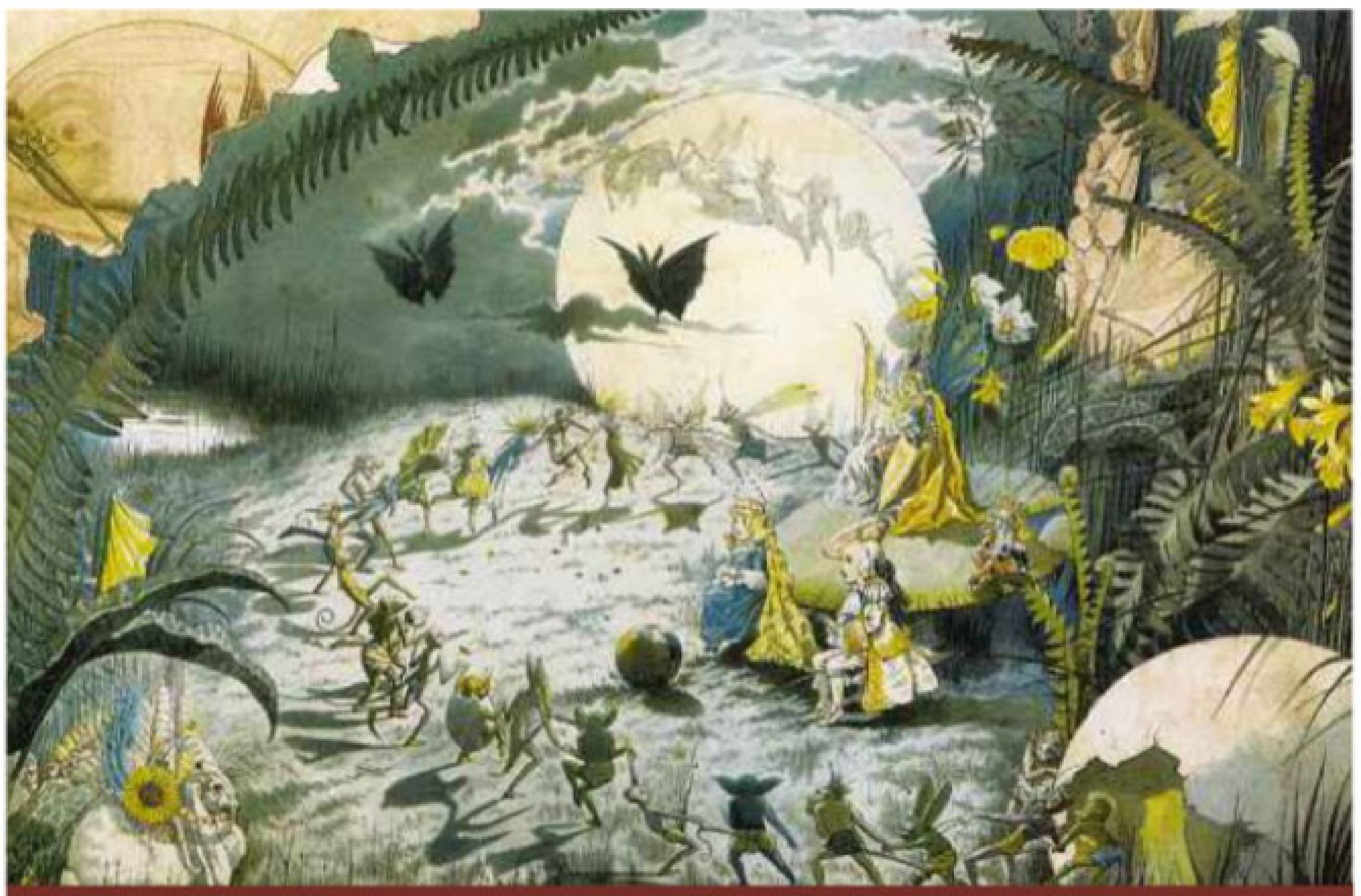

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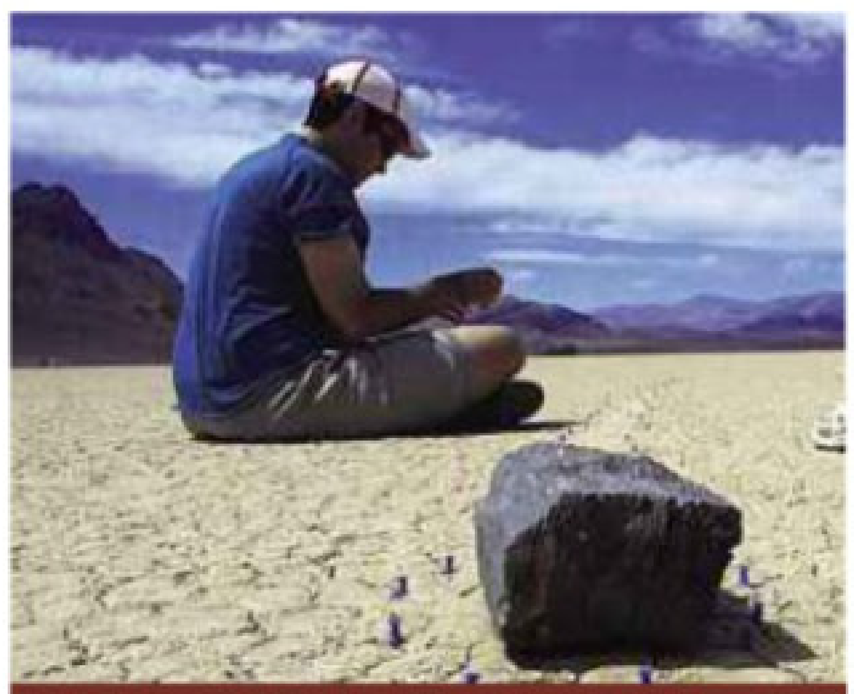

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30 THE FAIRY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY

The Fairy Investigation Society, dedicated to tracking down modern accounts of the Little People, must rank as one of the strangest British organisations ever. **SIMON YOUNG** tells the story of this curious enterprise, through five key episodes in its eccentric and largely forgotten history.

38 SEEING FAIRIES

MARJORIE T JOHNSON spent years collecting accounts of fairy sightings and the fruits of her labour finally saw print this year in the most comprehensive collection of modern fairy encounters ever assembled. Here we present a small selection of the riches contained within its pages...

46 THE MUSIC OF FAIRYLAND

The Little People have long been associated with music. Composers, artists, writers and observers of the natural world have all reported unearthly strains hovering in the air, and some have even attempted to write them down. **CHRIS WOODYARD** keeps her ears open and listens for the lovely and mysterious sounds of Fairyland.

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editorial

Seeing impossible things?

A NEW FAIRY CENSUS

In 1955, Marjorie T Johnson, secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society (FIS), and Scottish folklorist and author Alasdair Alpin MacGregor collaborated on an unlikely-sounding project for the mid-20th century: a fairy census. Letters went out to the national press asking people to send in their experiences of the Little People, which would be added to those Marjorie had already collected and published in book form.

So: did people still see fairies in a grey postwar Britain where rationing had only just ended? Oddly enough, they did. Mostly, as you'd expect, in rural areas, but also in suburban gardens and parks; even, on occasion, within human dwellings. And not just fairies, but elves, pixies, gnomes and other strange diminutive beings somewhat harder to identify. The Little People, it seemed, were still with us, and continued to enjoy a hidden existence in parallel to the drabber one of everyday British life. Sometimes they even emerged into plain view to cheer things up a bit, as in the celebrated case of the Wollaton Park gnomes, driving around in their brightly coloured little cars to the amazement of local schoolchildren.

The results of Marjorie Johnson's unusual enquiry were, sadly, never published, and the FIS appears to have wound down in the aftermath of the census. Only now, with the long-delayed publication of *Seeing Fairies* by Anomalist Books, can we take stock of the strange sightings that Marjorie collected (you'll find a selection on pp38-45). And what an astonishing, ravishing collection it is: 400-odd first-hand accounts of encounters with beings that common sense tells us do not, and cannot, exist; and yet…

Dr Simon Young – FT's resident folklorist and fairy-fancier – has been researching the history of the Fairy Investigation Society (see pp30-37), and now he is attempting to revive its work by launching a new fairy census. We don't know what Simon will find, 60 years after the last survey; we can only hope that fairies and their kind have fared better than most of our native fauna over the same period, but it seems all too likely that they've suffered the same fate as our farmland birds and small mammals.

Perhaps there's some room for optimism, though; after all, we continue to receive reports of anomalies of all kinds – which you can read in our 'It Happened to Me' letters section and in the books of the same name – including the odd encounter with the Little People. Therefore, we'd encourage all FT readers to get involved in the year-long fairy census: read Simon's column on p25 for further details, or visit www.fairyist.com/survey/ to take part.

CRABZILLA CONQUERS THE WORLD

In October, we were amused to see the one-time denizen of a 'playful' (ahem) FT feature from last year ("Weird Whitstable", by our sometime cover artist Quinton Winter; **FT301:38-41**) become headline news and an Internet sensation. 'Crabzilla', as the giant crustacean supposedly lurking in the waters off Whitstable harbour was dubbed, appeared as a 'news' story in the *Sunday Express* (12 Oct) and garnered coverage in the *Daily Mail*, *Star*, *Mirror* and others before going viral online and getting a mention on the BBC's *Have I got News for You*. Reports of a "riesige Krabbe", a "crabe géant" and a "cangrejo gigante" appeared on news sites around the world.

Funnier still than the 50ft [15m] crab's meteoric rise to international stardom were the efforts of well-meaning American 'skeptics' to debunk Crabzilla as an obvious 'fake'. Experts pointed out how the offending image could have been photoshopped, while the Metabunk website helpfully pointed out that: "A problem with any 'giant' animal is that there are physical limits as to how large a particularly shaped animal can be. Simple issues of energy intake and expenditure limit things in the wild, but beyond that there's a hard limit on actually being able to move. Animals with exoskeletons (crustaceans, insects) are especially limited."

Try telling that to Crabzilla, who now has his own entry on the Snopes.com urban legend website.

BOGUS SOCIAL WORKERS ARE BACK

The strange phenomenon of the Bogus Social Worker (BSW) has made a comeback recently, and on p53 Emma McNeill ponders the possible reasons for this. Just as we were going to press, a new report of a BSW surfaced.

On 13 October, a couple knocked on a woman's door in Torquay, Devon, claimed to be from the local social services department, and said they had come to check on her children. She agreed to let them examine her two children, and only realised they were bogus when she asked social services what the problem was. Neither of the children was harmed or physically molested. The male BSW, who wore a badge with the name Mark, was in his 50s, about 5ft 8in (173cm) tall, stocky with short grey hair and wearing frameless glasses. The female BSW, who wore a badge with the name Susie, was blonde, about 5ft 5in (165cm) tall, with hair in a bun, wearing a while blouse and trousers. The police were said to be looking for them. *Western Daily Press, 10 Oct 2014.*

DAVID R SUTTON

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Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Here come the clowns (again)!

Creepy clown outbreaks across the globe – from Wasco, California, to the south of France

NEW THIS MORNING
CLOWNS ROAMING THE STREETS OF CALIFORNIA TOWN
NO ONE IS SURE WHO THEY ARE
rtv

LEFT: One of the many clowns of Wasco, California. **BELOW**: Is this the stroking clown of Portsmouth?

As in October last year [**FT311:20-21**], there has been an upsurge of creepy clown sightings. In the week up to 13 October, police in Bakersfield, California, received 20 reports of clowns all over the city, some allegedly wielding guns, machetes or baseball bats. On 10 October an unarmed 14-year-old boy dressed as a clown was arrested for chasing children on the west side of town. He said he was participating in a hoax he had seen online. Instagram photos showed scary clowns posing in different landmarks around Wasco, Delano and Bakersfield, the snapshots including captions like "come out and play" and "It's funny you guys think I got arrested." A policeman in Wasco thought the social media accounts were just "copycats" who heard about the sightings, which, he said, might have been sparked by a couple dressing up as clowns for an art project. The @RealWascoClown Twitter account also claimed responsibility: "I am the creepy, evil-looking clown that is roaming the streets of Wasco, California, at night. Come Find Me I will give you a balloon." *[R] 12 Oct; ABC News, 13 Oct; abcnews.go.com, 16 Oct 2014.*

On 17 October, there were reports of a balloon-carrying clown walking the streets of Fishers, a suburb of Indianapolis, Indiana. Police officers investigated, but the mystery clown had vanished. *D. Mail, 17 Oct 2014.*

Meanwhile in Portsmouth, England, a clown scared children by lurking silently in streets and shops, holding a balloon and *stroking people* (you read that right). A 15-year-old schoolboy was believed to be behind the mask. Rebecca Hodgson wrote on Facebook that the clown scared her daughters by "cycling around in circles in front of them staring at them". Karen Wilcock, an employee of Stage Door dancewear shop, said: "In this day and age we don't need this sort of thing." *BBC News, 20 Oct 2014.*

In Montgomery, Illinois, Regina Janito – along with her 17-year-old daughter and three other minors – were visiting something called the Massacre Haunted House (don't ask) when they were confronted in the parking lot by two employees dressed as clowns and holding sex toys. One of the men poked the 17-year-old with a sex toy and made "lewd and offensive remarks", while the other simulated a sex act with the toy. One of them was eventually arrested and charged with battery and disorderly conduct. *wxyz.com, (Scripps Media), 22 Oct 2014.*

Coulrophobia (fear of clowns) has also swept northern France, apparently beginning in the suburbs around the town of Douai, near the border with Belgium. On 13 October a girl in the town of Sin-le-Noble told police she was chased by an armed person in a clown costume. The next day a clown attacked a student in Lambres-lez-Douai, and the day after that a student was threatened by a clown with a knife near a primary school in Flers-en-Escrebieux. A 19-year-old youth was arrested on 17 October in Bethune, Pas-de-Calais, after waving a stick resembling a long knife while chasing a group of teenagers, who sought refuge in a chip stand. He was given a six-month suspended jail term, made to do 105 hours of community service and banned from carrying a weapon for five years. After receiving some 20 calls about creepy clown sightings all on 17 October, Pas-de-Calais police took to social networks to warn citizens to be aware of the trend.

After a rumour that a clown was stalking the eastern French town of Mulhouse on 22 October, five teenagers armed themselves with a baseball bat, knuckle-dusters, a teargas canister, a hammer and a truncheon to mete out vigilante justice. They were arrested and later released on bail.

Then the clowning spread to the south of France. On Saturday night, 25 October, police in the Mediterranean port town of Agde arrested 14 teenagers dressed as clowns, carrying pistols, knives and baseball bats, who had mustered in the parking lot of a high school. Several other complaints poured in about "armed clowns" in the region. In Montpellier a clown was arrested after beating up a pedestrian with an iron bar, while three motorists in different towns complained about "scary clowns" threatening them.

There were many theories about the origin of the trend in a country where the American fear-fest of Hallowe'en has yet to take hold. These included a challenge launched on social networks, a video published on YouTube showing a terrifying clown ambushing people – which had some 31 million views – and a recent episode of the popular TV series *American Horror Story* featuring Twisty the killer clown. *thelocal.fr, 17+20+24 Oct; [AFP] 20+26 Oct 2014.* See also "Don't Send In The Clowns" by Tim Weinberg and Ben Radford [**FT226:34-41**].

MODERN WITCHCRAFT
Early-hours exorcisms on the street corners of south London
PAGE 20

PRAYING PARROT
And other strange tales from the animal kingdom
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BEST CASES BUSTED?
New analysis reveals famous UFO photos as hoaxes after all
PAGE 28

The Conspirosphere

NOEL ROONEY on how the recent Ebola outbreak (if it's actually real, of course) has led to media panic and fears that They are trying to kill us all off...

Some things the doctor just can't cure. An only mildly jaundiced reader of the media response to the recent outbreak of Ebola in Africa (colour me primrose) might be forgiven for thinking that conspiracy theory has gone mainstream, given the unalloyed panic this little microbe has engendered. Luckily the left field – running on the same tabloid schedule, but a rather different agenda – has stepped up to the plate and taken the story way beyond the simple realms of "we're all going to die" (this claim is, of course true, or was last time I checked, but it seems to gain a new lease of life every time we gain a new lease of death).

There are three main strands to the conspiracy world's take on Ebola: first, that the wild claims made by the mainstream media are a gross understatement, and, in fact, WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE; second, that Ebola – or at least this iteration of it – is a man-made, more specifically US military-industrial-complex-made, lurgy; and third, that Ebola is part of a determined effort by Them to wipe us all out so They can have the planet to Themselves; at which point they will perhaps be reduced to exploiting each other.

A good example of the first thread is Mike Adams at Natural News, who confidently predicts that 30 million Americans could be wiped out by the coming Ebola plague. Adams bases his prediction on – well, actually it's hard to work out what he bases it on, but he's confident; one litre of Ebola-infected blood can, according to Mike, kill 10 million Americans. Whether his assertions lead to a rash of potential donors coming forward remains to be seen.

GETTY IMAGES

As for the 'They did it' school: take a look at the work of Yoichi Shimatsu, on Jeff Rense's beautifully coiffured site, where he links the emergence of the disease to Western interference in the Balkans conflict, a feat of synaptic spacewalking that one can only gawp at in admiration.

Elsewhere, it's easy to find 'evidence' that the disease is the product of one or other medical arm of the real axis of evil – the US/UK and everyone who knows them. This seems to be such common currency in the conspirosphere that it's often only mentioned in passing, in an "of course, as everybody knows" kind of way.

And, yes, They are trying to knock us all off, using Ebola, among other currently popular diseases; further evidence that we are under constant threat from the very people who feed off us. Unless Ebola doesn't actually exist and is part of a false flag op (see pp56-57 this issue) to remove more of our liberties (an almost equally popular take), and kill us some other way. The idea of Illuminati-inspired de-population is almost as popular among conspiracy theorists as the idea of over-population, and often both positions seem to be held by the same person with no real discomfort. I've often wondered where They are going to make their money once we're not around in large enough numbers to profitably fleece, but this question is not answered in any of the sources I've read, and my emails remain unanswered.

www.naturalnews.com/047165_Ebola_transmission_CDC_propaganda_public_health.html; www.rense.com/general96/curse4horse.html

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Muppets have the best of taste in newspapers

BBC News, 27 Mar 2014.

Ireland welcomes gay penguins

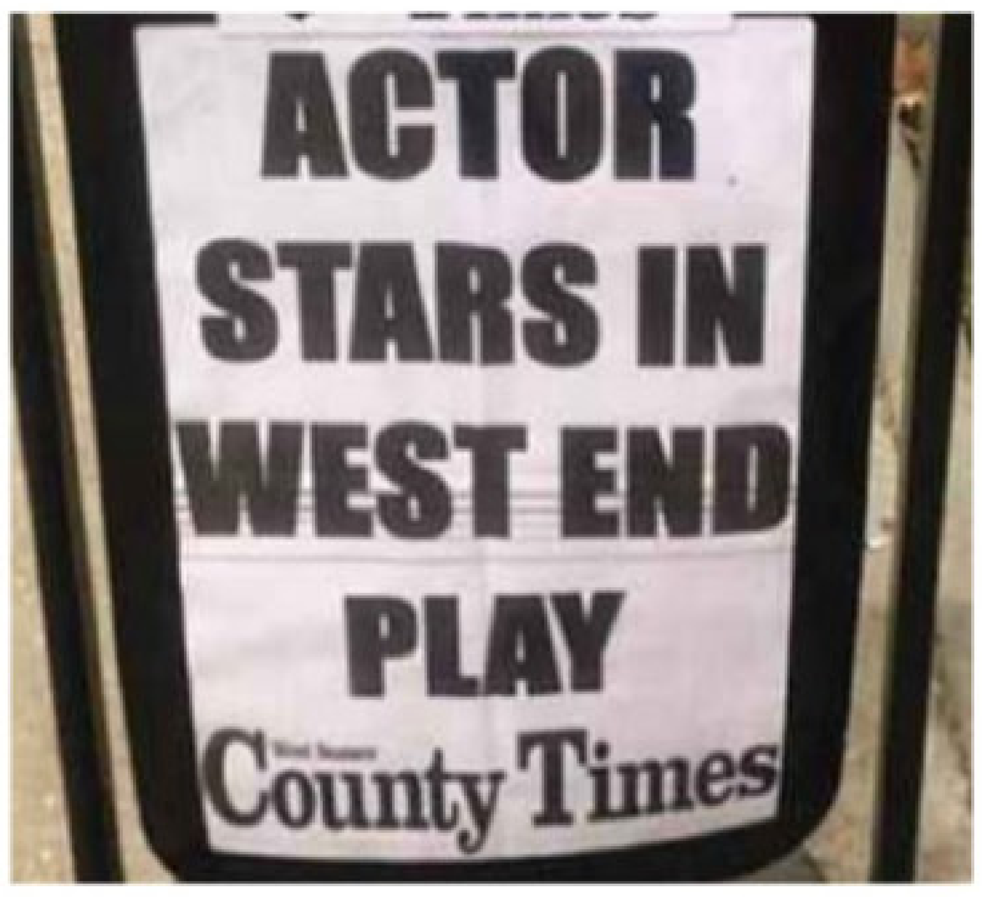
Canberra Times, 6 April 2014.

Noah's Ark is finally cleared as seaworthy by physicists

D.Telegraph, 3 April 2014.

Ex-Gladiator crashed van full of dead badgers

Guardian, 13 Mar 2014.



ACTOR STARS IN WEST END PLAY
County Times

West Sussex County Times, –Feb 2014.

Spotlight falls on constables

Wolverhampton Express & Star, 4 April 2014.

'Dead grandmother' makes plea to Roy Keane

BBC News, 27 Mar 2014.

SURVIVORS' STORIES

GIRL RESCUED BY PUPPY AFTER 11 DAYS IN THE SIBERIAN WILDERNESS, PLUS THE MAN WHO CHEATED DEATH (AGAIN)

BOTH PHOTOS: SIBERIAN TIMES

ABOVE LEFT: Rescuers carry little Karina to safety. **ABOVE LEFT:** Naida the puppy kept Karina warm and went to summon help.

LOST IN THE TAIGA

Three (or four)-year-old Karina Chikitova survived 11 days and nights alone in a remote Siberian forest teeming with bears and wolves. She lives with her family in the remote settlement of Olom in the Sakha Republic, Russia's largest – and coldest – region, only slightly smaller than India. On 27 July, she had followed her father Rodion into the taiga, though he was unaware she had done so. Then she got hopelessly lost, even though she was only about 4 miles (6km) from home. Her grandmother, who was looking after her, was convinced her father had taken her with him to stay in his native village; in fact, the father was out fighting wildfires with a brigade of firemen. At the time, Karina's mother Talina was gathering hay in the fields, and it was four days before she made phone contact with Rodion and discovered that Karina was missing. There was a huge search involving 100 people, but tall grass made it impossible for helicopters and drones to spot Karina, who was wearing only a red undershirt and purple stockings. She was finally discovered sitting in a grassy 'nest', badly undernourished and desperately weak, her face covered in mosquito bites. She said she had drunk water from rivers and eaten wild berries.

The puppy kept her warm through the chilly nights

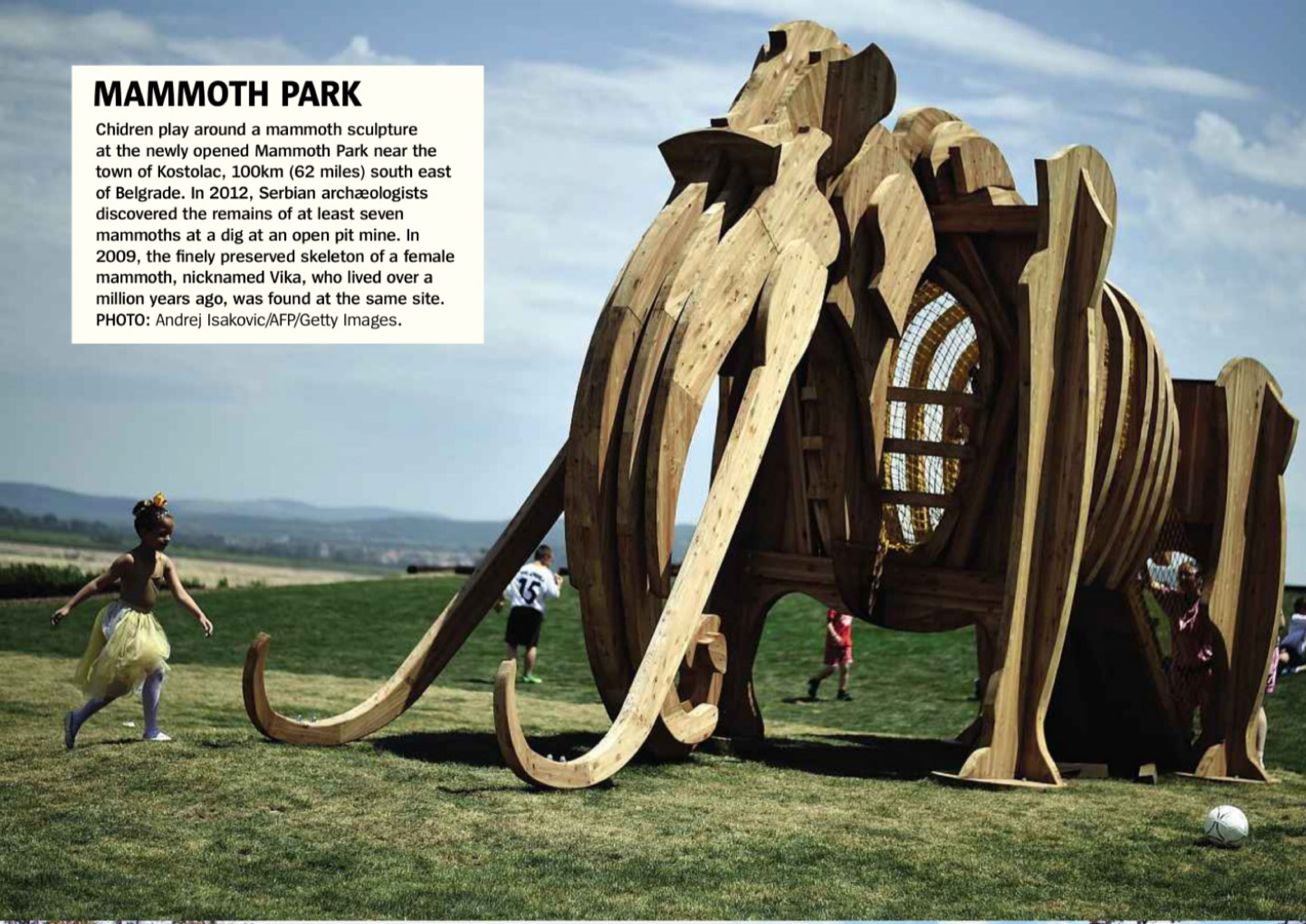
Karina made a good recovery and after five weeks was discharged from hospital and returned to her village to be reunited with Naida, the five-month-old puppy that had saved her life. The dog had stayed with her for nine days, keeping her warm through the chilly nights, and then had gone back to her village, exhausted and hungry, to try and summon help. However, Naida was said to be of little use in finding her way back to Karina; nor were the sniffer dogs, which are trained to find people, not dog trails. This, however, was contradicted by a local reporter, who said: "It was the puppy that showed rescuers the way to Karina."

Rescuer Albert Semyonov said his men needed armed guards in looking for Karina, explaining: "The forest around Olom is full of bears." The breakthrough came when rescuers found Karina's footprint on the bank of a river where she had gone to drink water. Next to her print was the paw mark of a dog. The little girl was found the next day. Fedora Gogoleva, her doctor at the City Children's Hospital in Yakutsk, claimed that Karina's Siberian upbringing, going into the forest with her grandmother to pick berries, meant she was not daunted, nor did she feel any danger. *rt.com, 10 Aug; Sun, 12 Aug; Siberian Times, 11 Aug +18 Sept; Huffington Post, 11 Aug; dailymail.co.uk, 19 Sept 2014.*

TEFLON MAN

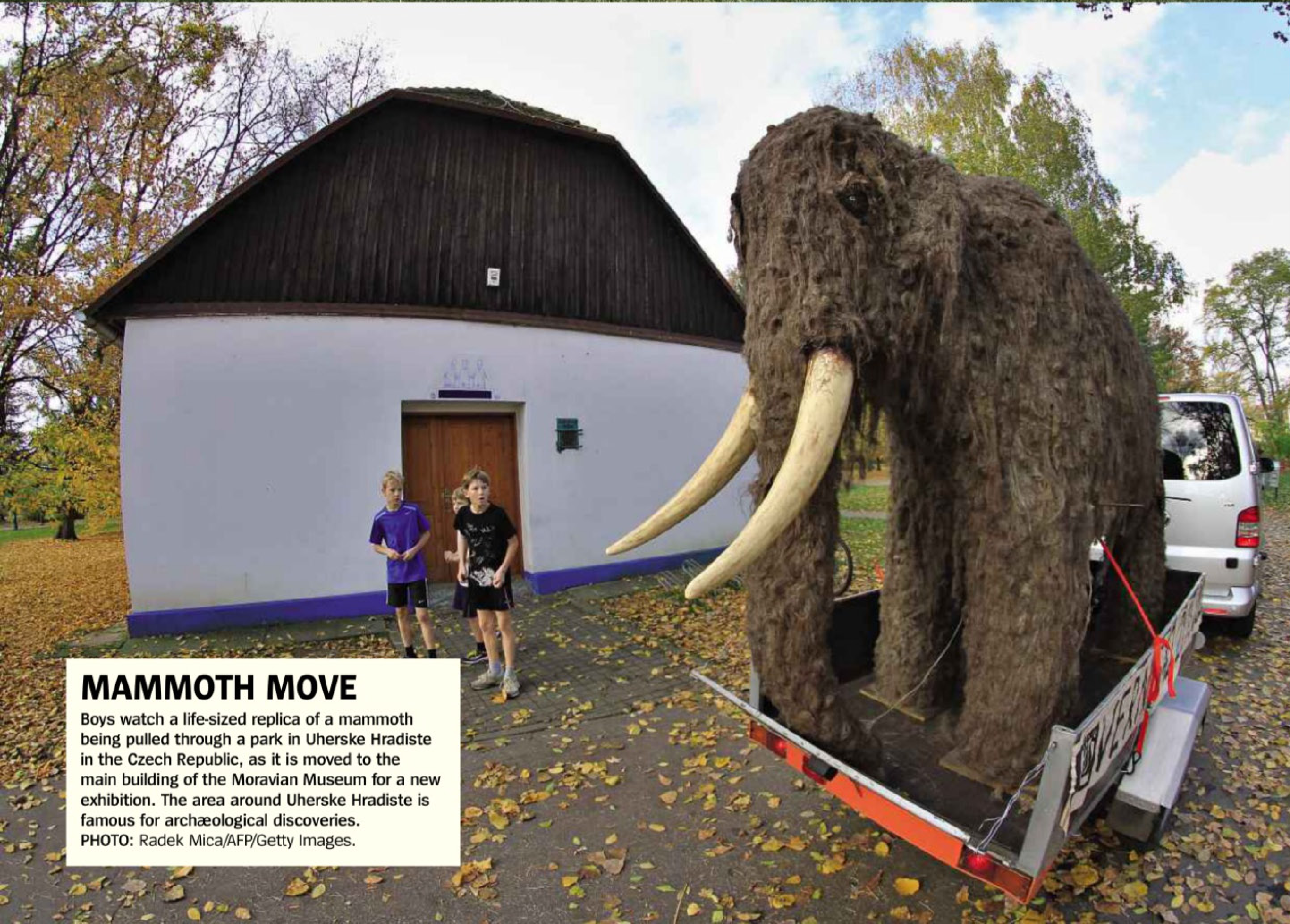
Garrey (or Garrye) Ashton, 44, an account manager from Frimley in Surrey, has narrowly dodged death five times, and claims to be "the luckiest man in Britain" – always an ambivalent epithet. In the latest near miss, he was with a group of 20 friends on his cousin's stag weekend in Newquay, Cornwall. "I'd been for a few, maybe six, pints of lager on the first night of the stag do and I decided to have a bit of an early night," he said. "I got back to the hotel about 1am and decided to check out the cliffs, but I went a bit far and the next thing I knew I was falling. I went down the first 10ft [3m] trying to stop myself, but then it was a sheer drop of about 100ft [30m] and I don't remember anything after that. The next thing I knew the sea was lapping at my feet and I woke up and realised I was at the bottom of the cliff with no shoes on, a sore head and a leg on fire. My first thought was: 'Blimey, I'm alive!'" He had cuts, bruises and a trapped nerve in the neck. He limped into the hotel for breakfast, and his friends called an ambulance that rushed him to hospital.

When he was 12, he was hit by a car while riding his bicycle and sent flying over the handlebars, sustaining bruising and a cut lip. At 14, he was knocked over by a car as he crossed the road, this time suffering minor injuries to his leg. At 16 he had an electric shock and was thrown across his bedroom after fiddling with a plug. At 20, he was working as a forklift driver when a pulley snapped, throwing him backwards and breaking his neck. *D.Express, D.Star, 19 Jan 2014.*



MAMMOTH PARK

Chidren play around a mammoth sculpture at the newly opened Mammoth Park near the town of Kostolac, 100km (62 miles) south east of Belgrade. In 2012, Serbian archæologists discovered the remains of at least seven mammoths at a dig at an open pit mine. In 2009, the finely preserved skeleton of a female mammoth, nicknamed Vika, who lived over a million years ago, was found at the same site. **PHOTO:** Andrej Isakovic/AFP/Getty Images.



MAMMOTH MOVE

Boys watch a life-sized replica of a mammoth being pulled through a park in Uherske Hradiste in the Czech Republic, as it is moved to the main building of the Moravian Museum for a new exhibition. The area around Uherske Hradiste is famous for archæological discoveries. **PHOTO:** Radek Mica/AFP/Getty Images.

SIDELINES...

UNDER HIS NOSE

Dr Bryn Dentinger, 36, head of mycology at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, discovered three new species of mushroom in a packet of porcini bought by his wife Rachel at a shop near their home in Isleworth, west London. He named them *Boletus bainiugan* ('white beef liver'), *B meiweiniuganjun* ('delicious cattle liver fungus') and *B shiyong* ('edible'). The majority of porcini mushrooms hail from remote areas of China. *(London) Eve. Standard, 27 Sept 2014.*

FINALLY HATCHED

Tiny water fleas (*Daphnia pulicaria*) have been hatched from dormant eggs that had been lying on the bottom of South Center Lake in Minnesota for around 700 years, possibly the oldest animal eggs ever to be brought back to life. *[AP] 11 Jan 2014.*

AUDACIOUS RAID

An owl flew into a 10th storey apartment, apparently opened a birdcage, and killed one of two canaries inside. Sue Sausser awoke on 17 August to find bird droppings and feathers all over her apartment in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and the brownish, yellow-eyed owl between the wall and the chest of drawers on which the birdcage sits. It flew out the door and perched on the balcony long enough to be photographed. *Irish Examiner, 20 Aug 2014.*

MARTIN ROSS

Oddities in the skies

Meteoric ice is uncommon, but a plummeting human UFO?

WALES NEWS SERVICE

ABOVE: Dr Inderpal Singh holds up some of the deep space ice that crashed through his roof in Cardiff.

CARDIFF ICE METEOR

At 6am on Sunday, 21 September, Dr Inderpal Singh, 40, and his family were awoken by a loud bang. A block of ice had smashed through the roof of their house in Birchgrove, Cardiff, South Wales, and came to rest in thick loft insulation. It was only later that morning that the family noticed bits of roof slate all over their car and the ground near the house, and then saw the hole in the roof. A builder then found the fist-sized block of ice. Unlike the majority of icy missiles, which come from aircraft, this was meteoric ice from deep space, the formation of which is currently not understood.

In 2005, 12 climatologists co-wrote a paper on the ice-bomb mystery in the *Journal of Atmospheric Chemistry*. They collected reports of 40 cases around the world since 1999 of puzzling falling ice, which they named megacryometeors. They suggested that the ice forms in the upper atmosphere by a process similar to the formation of hail inside thunderstorms. They speculated that global warming was causing the lower part of the atmosphere – the troposphere, where we live – to expand and rise. This means that the tropopause, the so-called roof of the troposphere, is forced to a greater height, where it cools more than normal. Thus the new, steeper temperature difference between warm and cold air in the upper atmosphere generates turbulent up-and-down winds that repeat the hail-formation process, but without a thunderstorm [**FT214:25**].

Megacryometeors were reported in China in 1995 and across Europe in 2000 [**FT82:43, 132:6, 133:66, 140:66**]. One that fell in Brazil in 1998 weighed 200kg (440lb). Documented references to ice falls from clear skies go back to the first half of the 19th century; for example, 2kg (4.4lb) in Cordoba, Spain, in 1829, and 1kg (2.2lb) in New Hampshire in 1851. Probably the best documented was a 2kg chunk with 51 layers of ice that nearly brained meteorologist RF Griffiths in Manchester on 2 April 1973 [**FT13:9**]. See also "Look out below: Do you want ice with that?" by Peter Hassall [**FT263:46–49**]. *South Wales Echo, 23 Sept 2014.*

MACCLESFIELD SUPERMAN

At 1.30pm on 13 June, passengers and crew on a passenger plane were astonished to see a "flying man" zip past their aircraft at an altitude of 3,500ft (1,070m). He (or it) appeared as if from nowhere as the Airbus 320 passed above Broken Cross, towards central Macclesfield in Cheshire, while coming in to land at Manchester. The sky was clear and visibility about six miles (9.6km). The pilot and first officer thought the human UFO (dubbed the "Superman of Macclesfield") was a paraglider but could not see a canopy. There was no record of any paragliders, parachutists or balloonists in the area at the time.

The UK Airprox Boards report, released on 17 October, stated: "[The pilots] first sighted the object a few hundred metres in the 11 o'clock position, 200 to 300ft [60–90m] above. It passed down the left-hand side of the aircraft at 100 to 200 metres [330–660ft]." Air traffic controllers on the ground could see nothing on their radar screens at the time, and hang gliding experts said weather conditions would have ruled out a lone flyer in the area. The report added the pilots "could not be certain that it was not a person-shaped balloon", but that was also unlikely in the conditions. Some observers speculated that the flying man was using a wingsuit, though there was no way to assess the possibility. Wingsuits have been successfully used by skydivers to land without a parachute, though the practice is not common. Aviation expert Chris Yates said: "It is a complete and utter mystery."

Previous "human UFOs" include a figure filmed flying over people in Qutub Minar, India, in April, a man spotted soaring over Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, in February 2009, and the classic fortean sighting of a naked winged woman with a greenish glow, reported crossing the night sky near Da Nang, Vietnam, in 1969. *inquisitr.com, dailymail.co.uk, 18 Oct; macclesfield-express.co.uk, 20 Oct 2014.*

Improbable winners

Pareidolia, psychopathic late-risers and directional pee

The 24th Ig Nobel prize ceremony was held on 18 September, as usual in Harvard's Sanders Theatre, where a stern eight-year-old girl was on hand to enforce the strict 60-second limit on acceptance speeches. These spoof awards – which "first make people laugh and then make them think" – have become almost as famous as the real Nobels. Four Japanese researchers from Kitasato University took home the physics prize, "for measuring the amount of friction between a shoe and a banana skin, and between a banana skin and the floor, when a person steps on a banana skin that's on the floor." Kiyoshi Mabuchi's team showed why apple and orange peel are not quite so hazardous. They are interested in how friction and lubrication affect the movement of our limbs. The polysaccharide follicular gels that give banana skins their slippery properties are also found in the membranes where our bones meet.

Kang Lee of the University of Toronto and colleagues in Beijing won the neuroscience prize for investigating why our brains see the Blessed Virgin Mary (or whoever) in damp stains, tree stumps, etc. Their paper, "Seeing Jesus in Toast: Neural and Behavioral Correlates of Face Pareidolia", appeared in *Cortex*, v.53, April 2014, pp60–77. Using Functional MRI, Lee's team saw how the same parts of the brain light up when we see non-existent faces as when we see real ones. Prof Lee explained that this type of pattern recognition was hard-wired, and even chimps experienced it. "The face you are going to see is determined by your personal expectations or beliefs," he added. "So, for example, Buddhists might not see Jesus on toast, but they might see a Buddha on toast." (Damned obvious, really.)

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

ABOVE: University of Oslo scientists attempt to disguise a human as a polar bear.

Peter Jonason, of the University of Western Sydney, Australia, and colleagues, won the psychology gong for a paper called "Creatures of the Night", presenting "evidence that people who habitually stay up late are, on average, more self-admiring, more manipulative, and more psychopathic than people who habitually arise early in the morning". Successful psychopaths tend to run things while unsuccessful psychopaths languish in jail.

Public Health was won by Jaroslav Flegr of Charles University, Czech Republic, and others "for investigating whether it is mentally hazardous for a human being to own a cat" – basically this is about latent toxoplasmosis and the risk of developing schizophrenia. As with all categories, exact sources can be found at the website www.improbable.com. The prize for biology went to researchers in Germany and the Czech Republic for carefully amassing evidence, over scores of walks, that dogs align to the north-south axis of Earth's magnetic field to urinate and defecate. The scientists are unsure if dogs align on purpose, or indeed why they do it at all.

The art prize was won by Marina de Tommaso of the University of Bari, Italy, and colleagues "for measuring the relative pain people suffer while looking at an ugly painting, rather than a pretty painting, while being shot [in the hand] by a powerful laser beam".

The economics prize, not for the first time, provided an opportunity for the organisers to vent their sarcasm. It went to the Italian government's National Institute of Statistics "for proudly taking the lead in fulfilling the European Union mandate for each country to increase the official size of its national economy by including revenues from prostitution, illegal drug sales, smuggling, and all other unlawful financial transactions between willing participants."

The Arctic science prize was won by Eigil Reimers of the University of Oslo, Norway, and colleagues, "for testing how reindeer react to seeing humans who are disguised as polar bears" (they run like hell). The prize for nutrition went to Spanish researchers for exploring the value of bacteria taken from children's fæces in sausage-making, while doctors in the US and India won the medicine prize for demonstrating how to stop an uncontrollable nosebleed with nasal tampons made from bacon (Muslims and Jews, presumably, must look elsewhere for a cure). *BBC News, Guardian.com, 19 Sept 2014.*

SIDELINES...

WE'RE IN HEAVEN

Everyone on Earth is now officially a citizen of Laniakea, the name given to the super-cluster of galaxies that contains our own Milky Way. The word means "immeasurable heaven" in Hawaiian – appropriate for a structure 500 million light years across that contains 100,000 galaxies and a hundred quadrillion suns. Neighbouring super-clusters are called Shapley, Hercules, Coma and Perseus-Pisces. *D.Telegraph, 4 Sept 2014.*

SOMEHOW INEVITABLE

Calvin E Wank, 56, of Deposit, upstate New York, was arrested in 21 September for masturbating in a car park near a Love's Travel Stop in Kirkwood. Truckers called police to report his lewd act. In his mugshot, Wank was wearing smudged eye make-up and lipstick. *MX News (Sydney), 25 Sept 2014.*

FLATULENT NEWS

In an interview with *Charisma* magazine, Rev Bert Farias, US founder of Holy Fire Ministries (End Time zealots), claimed that people turn homosexual when they are possessed by "fart demons". Meanwhile a new study at the University of Exeter, published in the *Medicinal Chemistry Communications* journal, suggests that smelling small amounts of hydrogen sulphide in farts could reduce the risk of cancer, strokes, arthritis and dementia by preserving the body's mitochondria. *iStock, 12 July; queerty.com, 23 July 2014.*

SIDELINES...

SHAFTED IN SHAANXI

Zhu Chiang, 42, thought he had bought a £5,000 pedigree white-coated husky from a street vendor in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, but was shocked to find he'd been sold a fox cub. "He used to like anything raw and he never barked, not once," said Zhu. The cub is now living in a wildlife park. Is this ostension, the Gang of Fort wonders, or a riff on the Mexican Pet foaftale? *Metro, 22 Aug 2014.*

SOMETHING ON HER MIND

Surgeons found a bullet lodged in a Chinese woman's skull after she went to her doctor with a headache. Zhao, 72, from Liaoning province, had suffered a blocked nose, swollen lymph nodes and headaches for a decade before the 2.5cm bullet was removed from behind her nasal cavity. *mirror.co.uk, 17 Mar 2014.*

TOTAL COCK-UPS

Last May, a man went to the Royal Liverpool Hospital for a minor urological operation but was given a vasectomy by mistake. Doctors were trying to reverse the blunder, but the success rate for such reversal is only 55 per cent. Then in June, Johnny Lee Banks checked into hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, for a routine circumcision, but awoke to find his penis amputated. The two doctors named in his lawsuit denied removing the organ. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 7 May; Irish Independent, 26 July; <i> 31 July 2014.*

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

On 8 June, Wendy Morrell, 55, was watching TV when an eagle with a 4ft (1.2m) wingspan flew through open patio doors into her front room in Poole, Dorset, knocking over ornaments and pecking at potpourri. Local bird rescuers captured the Russian Steppe eagle, named Storm, which had been reported missing two days earlier. It had broken away from the perch where it was tethered after being spooked by a lorry. *D.Mail, D.Mirror, 10 June 2014.*

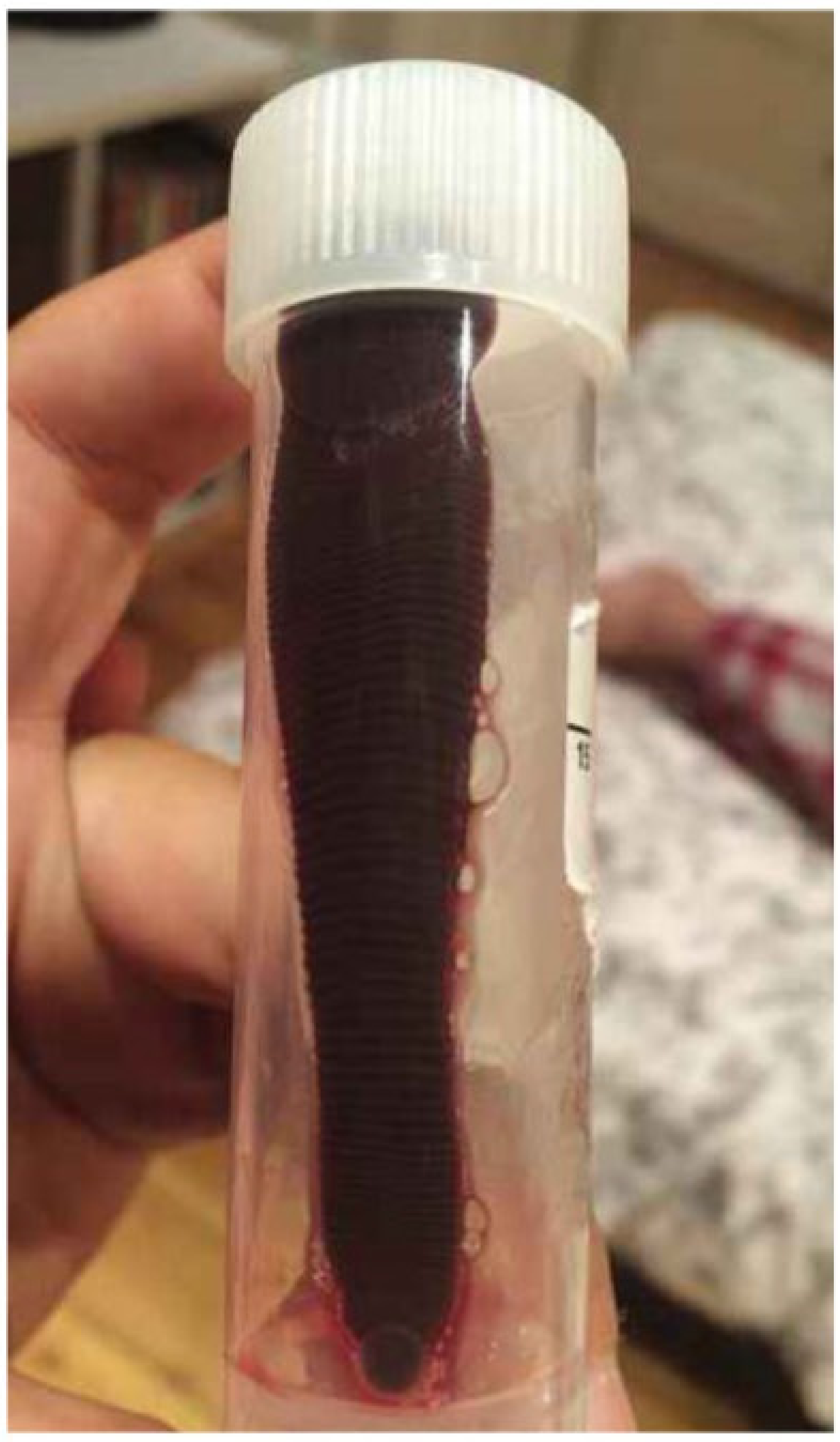
MEDICAL BAG

A LEECH UP THE NOSE, A SPIDER INSIDE YOU, AND A SPROUTING POTATO WHERE IT REALLY SHOULDN'T BE...

MR CURLY

A backpacker found a 3in (7.5cm) leech that had been living up her nose for a month after a trip to Southeast Asia. Daniela Liverani, 24, a bartender in Edinburgh, had been having nosebleeds for weeks but put them down to a burst blood vessel from a motorbike crash. She was having a shower when she realised the dark shape wriggling in her nose was actually an animal. She believes she picked it up in Vietnam or Cambodia, but even when she felt it moving up and down her right nostril, she thought it was a blood clot.

Regarding the shower, she said: "Obviously my nasal passages would open up because of the steam and the heat and the water, and it would come out quite far, about as far as my lip. So I could kind of see it out of the corner of my eye but still didn't think it was a worm because it just looked like a blood clot. On Thursday [9 October] I jumped out the shower and unsteamed the mirror and had a proper good look, and I could see little ridges on him. I tried to blow him out and grab him but I couldn't get a grip of him before he retreated back up my nose." She went to accident and emergency at Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary where doctors removed the leech with forceps and tweezers after a half-hour struggle.



CATERSNEWS.COM

LEFT: The leech that was removed from a backpacker's nostril after a half-hour tussle.

"He was about as long as my forefinger and as fat as my thumb," said Ms Liverani. "He could move so fast as well, which freaked me out. I've no idea how he got up there but he'd have got bigger and bigger from feeding on my blood. He had been curled up in a ball, using my nostril as a little nest, so [my friend] Jenny and I called him 'Mr Curly'. At one point, I could feel him up at my eyebrow. I asked the doctor what would've happened if I hadn't gone to hospital and she said he'd probably have worked his way into my brain." Leech expert Mark Siddal said Ms Liverani could have picked up the parasite while swimming, "or it could have gone in through her mouth as she was drinking water." *mirror.co.uk, 12 Oct; BBC News, D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 13 Oct 2014.*

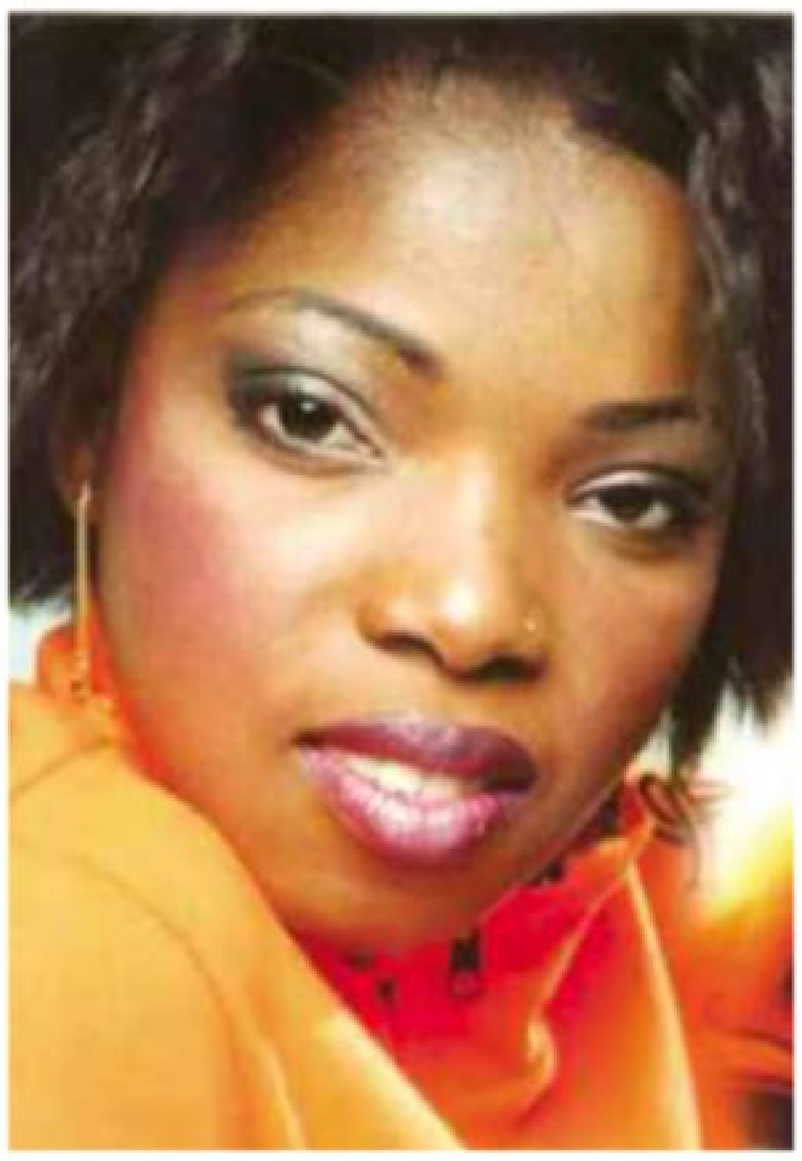
SPUD PLUG

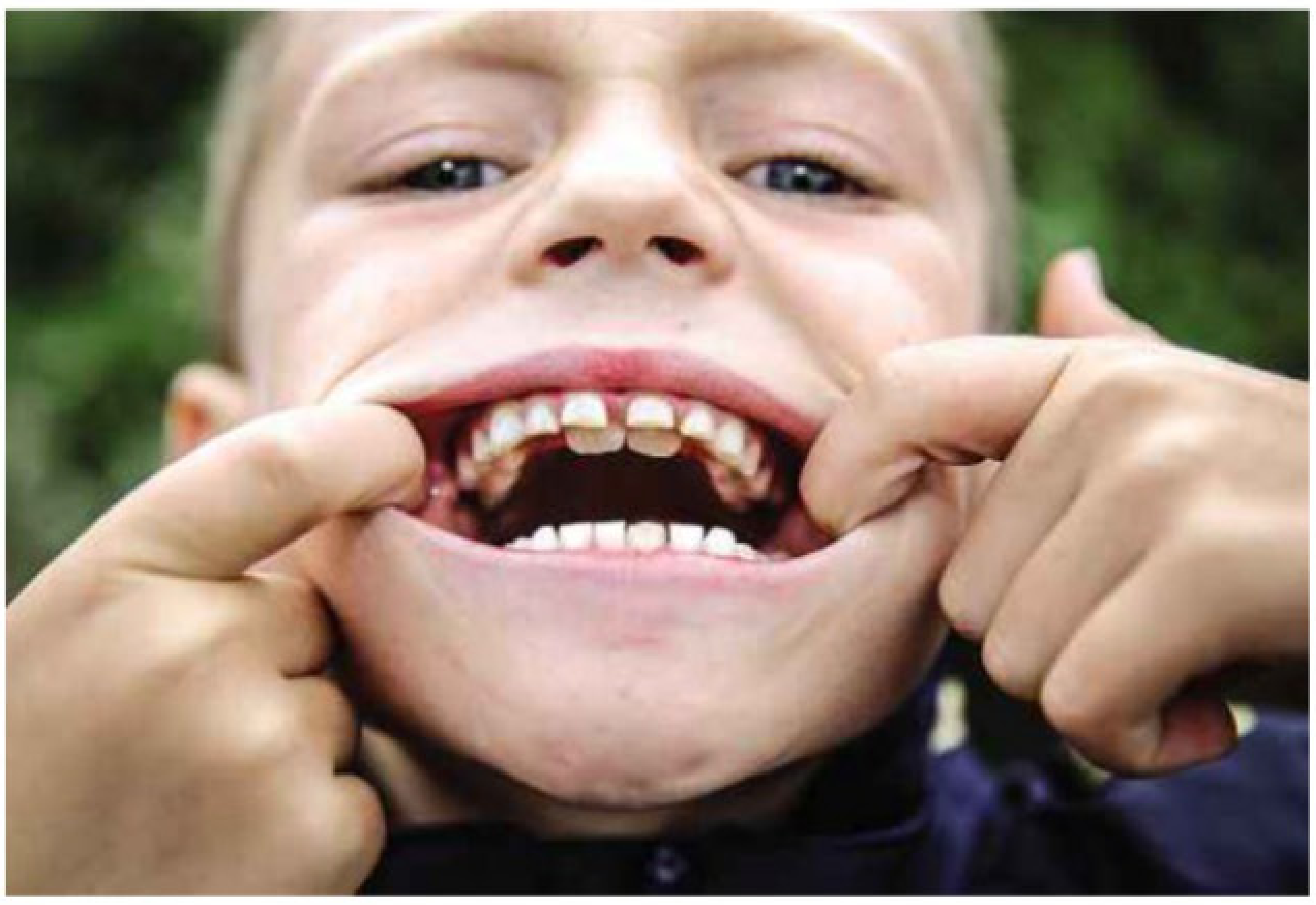
In late September, a 22-year-old woman went to a medical clinic in the town of Honda in Colombia complaining of severe pain in her lower abdomen. Nurse Carolina Rojas said she was shocked to discover roots coming out of the woman's vagina. "My mum told me that if I didn't want to get pregnant, I should put a potato up there, and I believed her," said the unnamed woman. The spud had been inside the woman for about two weeks. Doctors were able to remove it without surgery and they didn't expect the woman to experience any long-term effects. *[UPI] 2 Oct 2014.*

SINGING THROUGH SURGERY

Alama Kanté, a Guinea-born singer living in Paris, had a parathyroid gland tumour on her throat that had to be removed – but the risk in doing so was that she would never sing again. If surgeon Gilles Dhonneur had got it wrong with his scalpel by as little as a millimetre, it could have ended the singer's career. Instead of being given a general anæsthetic, Kanté was accompanied into theatre at the Henri Mondor Hospital, on the outskirts of Paris, last April by hypnotherapist Asmaa Khaled, who put her into a deep trance. She was given a local anæsthetic and was sufficiently conscious to sing songs from her new album throughout the procedure, so Prof Dhonneur would know exactly where to put his knife. That way, the soprano was still singing when the tumour had been sliced out. "It was as though I was not in the operating theatre at all," remembers Kanté, now fully recovered. "I was far away in Senegal." Prof Dhonneur is claiming a world first for removing a tumour under hypnosis in an operating theatre. "The pain of such an operation is intolerable if you are fully awake," he said. "Only hypnosis enables you to stand it."

Hypnotherapy was often used in operations in the late 19th century before the advent of modern anæsthetics. Given the other options – a slug of whisky, biting down on a piece





ROSSPARRY.CO.UK

ABOVE LEFT: Alama Kanté, who sang while her tumour was excised. **ABOVE RIGHT**: The Tooth Fairy hasn't called for Zak Brown.

of cloth, being held down on the operating table, or hoping you would pass out from the pain – it must have seemed like a good, if slightly cranky, bet. It went out of fashion with the advent of ether and chloroform, but was still used occasionally. Scottish surgeon James Esdaile made a name for himself in India in the 1840s by offering painless surgery for a plague of tumours caused by mosquito bites. He used 'mesmerism' – hypnosis with a quasi-religious tinge. Many years later, Irish surgeon Dr Jack Gibson, who died in 2005, also made use of hypnosis – without any anæsthetic – no fewer than 4,000 times. He often worked in rural hospitals where there were plenty of victims of farm accidents. The key to success is mind-set and the patient's motivation.

In recent years, hypnotherapy has seen a modest revival, especially with pregnant women wanting a natural birth, where hypnobirthing classes teach expectant mothers how to control pain when in labour. It has also been used against addictions to smoking, drinking and over-eating, while the Withington Hospital in Manchester reports excellent results in countering irritable bowel syndrome. Hypnotherapy is much more common in American hospitals than in the UK, because insurance companies have seen the evidence that it shortens recovery periods and therefore keeps down bills. *BBC News, 16 June; D.Telegraph, 17 June 2014.*

DENTAL GRATUITY

- Eight-year-old Zak Brown from Leeds has grown a second row of teeth, just like a shark. His adult teeth have come through behind his baby set instead of pushing them out. "It doesn't hurt and he has no problem eating," said his mother Claire, 38, "but he hated it when his sister and brother got money from the Tooth Fairy and he didn't. He would wiggle his teeth to make them come out – but nothing ever happened." He is on a two-year NHS waiting list to have the milk teeth extracted. *Sun, 1 Oct 2014.*

- A baby born with teeth has had them removed over concerns she might swallow them if they fell out. When Rose Pullen arrived with two fully formed lower incisors, her mother Chloe, 25, from Pantmawr in Powys, Wales, feared that breast-feeding would be painful, but in the event it didn't hurt. "I couldn't actually feel her teeth, but she went on the bottle for a few days until the teeth were taken out," she said. Most babies don't start teething until they are around six months old. Rose, who weighed 7lb 2oz (3.2kg) when she was born at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, had an operation to remove the teeth when she was three days old. Chloe Pullen and her husband Daniel later discovered that the dental anomaly ran in the family: Rose's grandmother was born with a single front tooth.

Natal teeth occur in about one in every 2,000 to 3,000 births. They usually develop in the lower gums and have little root structure, meaning they are often wobbly. For two babies born with teeth in 2013, see **FT313:9**, and for eight earlier examples, see **FT113:12**. Historical figures thought to have been born dentally equipped include the Roman emperor Valerian, Richard III of England and Louis XIV of France. *D.Mail, 20 Sept 2014.*

SPIDER INSIDE HIM

Dylan Maxwell from Australia was on holiday in Bali, celebrating his 21st birthday with his best friend, when a tiny spider burrowed through a small appendix scar on 11 October and travelled up his torso, leaving a red scar-like trail from his navel to his chest. He visited a local medical centre and was prescribed an antihistamine for an insect bite. "Well after running tests and putting things inside my stomach they finally found out it was a tropical spider that's been living inside me for the last three days," he posted on his Facebook page. "Haven't felt so violated in my life before! Just glad it's all over." Doctors removed the tropical visitor after he returned to Australia. "They managed to pull the spider out of my navel and put it in a specimen jar and took it away," he said. He didn't know what type of spider it was, but said it was about the size of a matchstick head. Maxwell's mates have nicknamed him "Spiderman". *[R] 16 Oct; irishexaminer.com, 18 Oct 2014.*

SIDELINES...

OBVIOUS, REALLY

Paul Stoner, 42, was nicked on 14 August after police found £6,500 worth of cannabis plants in a raid on his house in Unionville, Virginia. *nbc29.com, 19 Aug; telegraph.co.uk, 21 Aug 2014.*

INSUFFERABLE

Residents of Stoke Grange in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, have been plagued for two years by a mysterious screeching sound that can even be heard through double-glazing. Its incidence follows no particular pattern and the high-pitched sound can last from 10 minutes to an hour and a half. Environmental health authorities have been unable to find the cause. *Bucks Herald, 11 June 2014.*

SUMMER MADNESS

In protest at the sweltering temperature inside his cell in Nottingham jail on 21 July, an unnamed prisoner in his 50s gouged out his eyes with a makeshift knife – even though he was just days away from release. *D.Mail, Metro, 24 July 2014.*

NOT HIS DAY

Norwegian skydiver Idrup Remoy, 33, plummeted to earth when his main parachute malfunctioned. He opened his emergency chute but landed on a busy road in Empuriabrava, eastern Spain, and was promptly run over. He was taken to hospital with "numerous injuries". *Sun, Metro, 12 June 2014.*

SIDELINES...

MAGGOT EVICTION

A blind man was forced out of his home in Bermondsey, south London, after the rotting body of a neighbour spawned a plague of flies and maggots. Michael Sales, 71, found his housing association flat crawling with insects when he returned from holiday. The dead neighbour was undiscovered for three weeks. Mr Sales stayed with a friend while the flats were cleaned. *Metro, 29 Aug 2014.*

O LUCKY MAN!

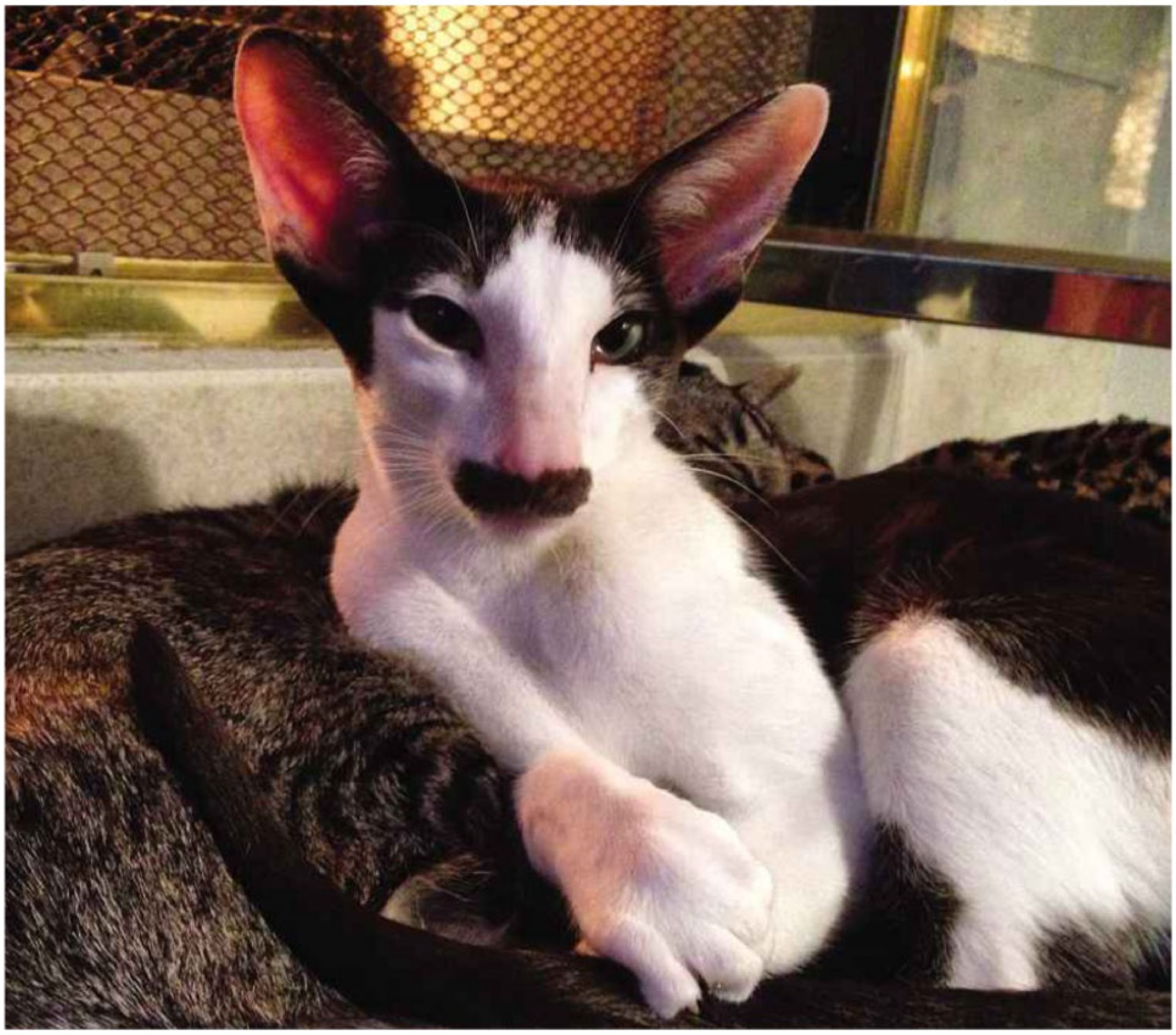
Maarten de Jonge, 29, was due to fly on both MH370, the Malaysian Airlines flight that vanished on 8 March, and MH17, the flight that was shot down over Ukraine on 17 July – but changed his plans at the last minute. The Dutchman, a racer with Malaysia's Terengganu Cycling Team, swapped his March ticket for an earlier flight to avoid having a stopover, and cancelled his July ticket in favour of a later, cheaper flight. *D.Telegraph, Herald Sun (Melbourne), 21 July 2014.*

WHAT CAN IT MEAN?

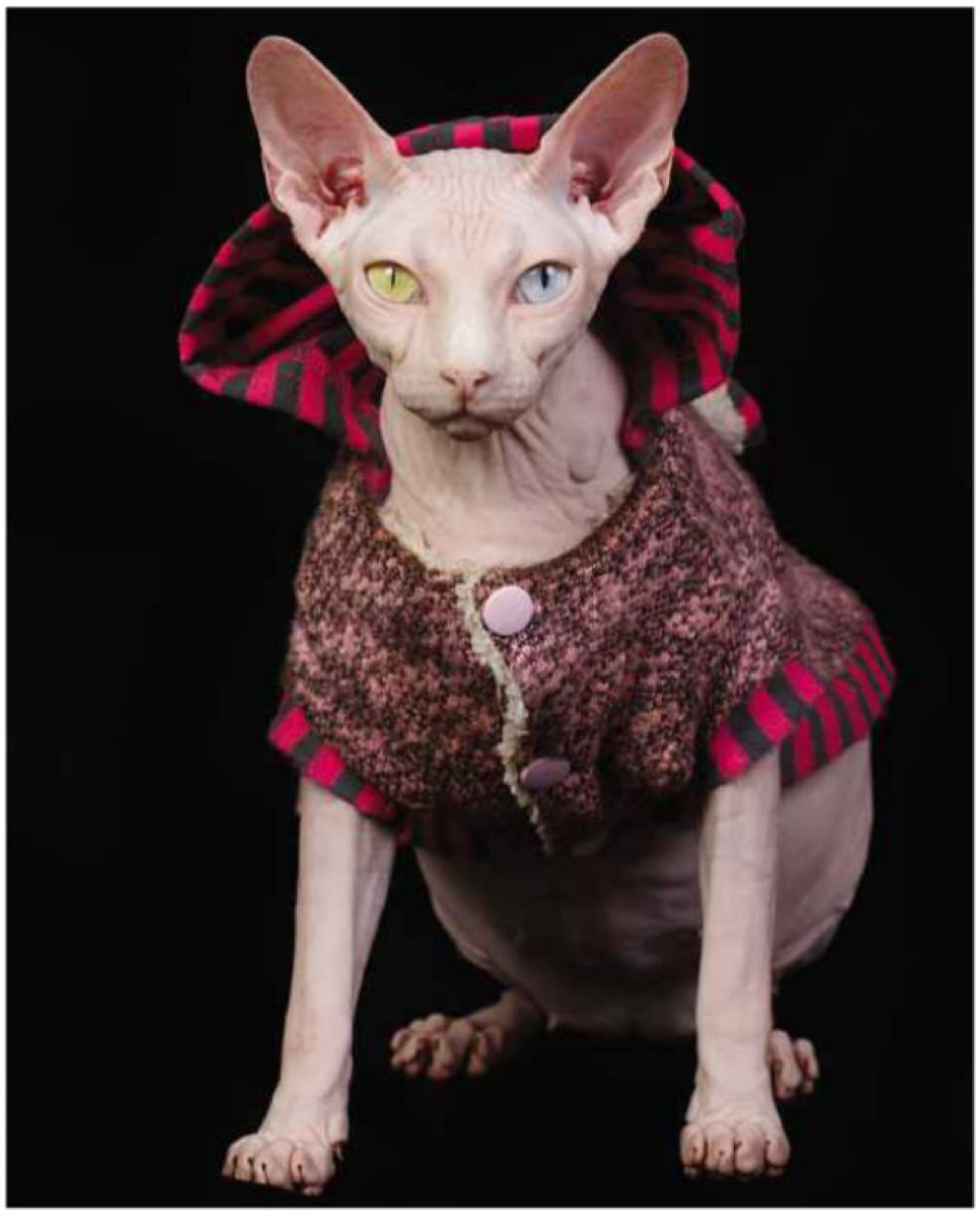
Sergeant Jason Von Tunk thought he was being set up for a possible ambush when he found a dead koala dumped in the driveway of Heywood police station in Victoria, Australia, on Saturday night, 2 August, with a A$50 banknote in its mouth. The koala had a head injury and looked as though it had been hit by a car. "We don't know what the message is," said Von Tunk. *Australian Associated Press, via Guardian, 5 Aug 2014.*

BACKWARDS FOR CHARITY

On 2 August, Kerry native Eamonn Hickson set the Guinness World Record for "Longest journey reversing a tractor and trailer", from Dingle to Anascaul, a total of 17.5km (just under 11 miles). The event was a part of an annual charity fundraiser, with proceeds going toward Kerry Cancer Support. *irishexaminer.com, 4 Aug 2014.*



REX/CHRISTINE GONZALEZ



REX / FRAN VEALE

TWO PURRTY STRANGE CATS

Stashe is a 10-month-old Oriental shorthair cat whose 'moustache' has made him famous. Besides looking like Groucho Marx, Stache has exceptionally large ears. His owner – or companion, if you want to be über-PC – is Christine Gonzalez, who lives in Ocean Township, New Jersey. *D.Mail, 16 Sept 2014.*

This hairless Sphinx cat with different coloured eyes (like the famous cats from Lake Van in Turkey), is called Gina and lives with Zivile Useckaite in Stepaside, Co Dublin.

Gina's lack of hair means that she has difficulty conserving heat, but her owner has found a stylish solution to the problem by dressing the pampered pet in tiny – though definitely eye-catching – sweaters, cardigans amd hoodies sourced from specialist online retailers. *Irish Examiner, 17 Jan 2014.*

T-SHIRTS HOODIES LADY-FIT CAPS TOWELS MUGS AND MORE

OUT OF THIS WORLD

SKYNET
USCSS NOSTROMO
Extraterrestrial Sleep EZ Ma'am Exterminators
JABBAZ BANTHA FODDER
TANNHAUSER GATE EXPLORATION TEAM
CANNONBALL
BOB'S COUNTRY BUNKER
NEVER GO FULL RETARD
He slimed me!
TIME FOR TIFFIN
The Devils in Skirts
PACIFIC PLAYLAND #32 ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS
I GOT WOOD
WAYNE STOCK
PFJ
JUDEAN PEOPLES FRONT SPLITTERS
Paradise Camp
ZOMBIE eat flesh.
SEA SHANTIES
AMITY ISLAND
EATER OF WORLDS
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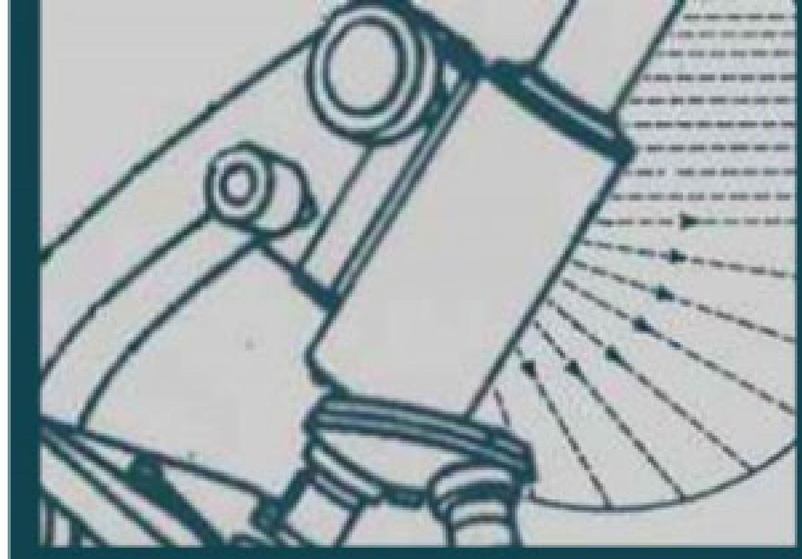
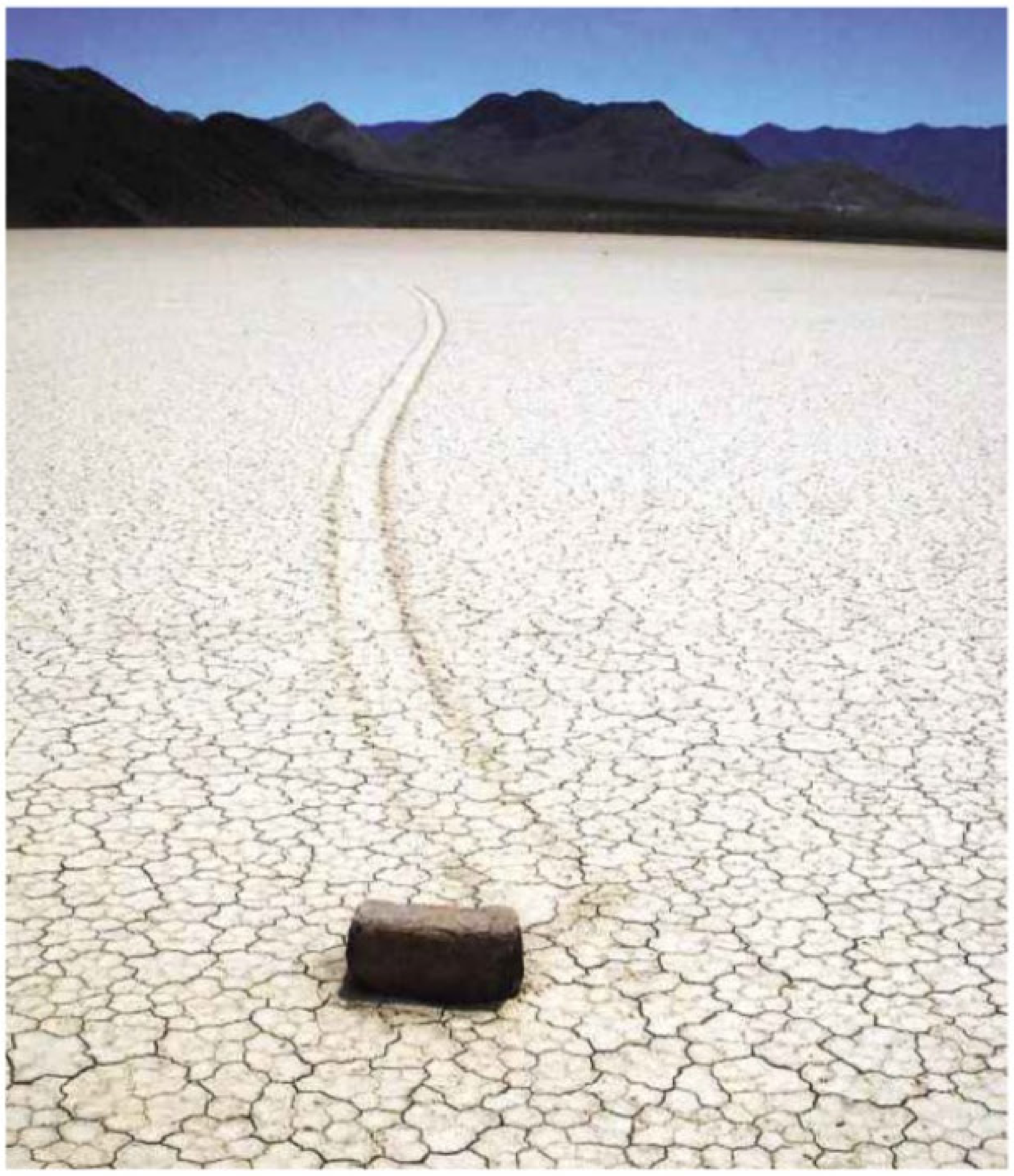


MATT PATTINSON

DEATH VALLEY ERRATICS

The mystery of the boulders that scoot across Racetrack Playa has a prosaic explanation, says **DAVID HAMBLING**, and it's nothing to do with psychic energy or pranksters



NASA

For decades, the boulders of Racetrack Playa in Death Valley, California, played a game with scientists. They looked like perfectly normal stones, but when nobody was looking, they moved. The movement is apparent from trails left in the ground, proved by marking stones and measuring them, and in later years has been measured by time-lapse photography and GPS tracking. But although the stones move, they only do so at long intervals, sometimes once a year, sometimes every few years. Their movement is erratic and may zigzag or go back on itself. The main thing was that nobody ever saw them moving – until now.

Racetrack Playa became a staple of 'unexplained mysteries of the world' compilations. The explanations ran the usual gamut from vortices of psychic energy at one end to the suggestion that it was all being done by pranksters. To the believers, it had to be something paranormal. This mood was captured by a 1979 story in *Omni* magazine by William Flew, "The Stones That Moved", in which the stones move at ever-increasing speed. They eventually head off to attack the space centre at Houston because, as one character says, "Nature was fed up with being tampered with by men and the atom bomb and their going to the Moon and all that."

To geologists, Racetrack Playa has always looked like a problem in physics. It is a dry lakebed, a completely flat expanse of cracked white clay, and the scattered stones on the surface range from a few centimetres in diameter to half a metre. The area sees powerful winds, rain and sometimes freezing conditions. The challenge was to work out how these might combine to move rocks.

When *Fortean Times* last reviewed the science in March 2010 [**FT259:9**], there were two main theories in play. One held that rain made the surface of the Playa slippery, and the rocks were then slid along it by winds of up to 90mph (145km/h). The other was that water on the Playa froze into sheets of ice; these were caught by the wind, and the impact of a moving ice sheet was enough to displace a stone.

A third theory later gained prominence: ice rafting. For up to 30 days of the year, the Playa is flooded, leaving many of the rocks part-submerged in wide, shallow pools. As these freeze, an ice collar forms around each rock, producing buoyancy that lifts the rock enough for the wind to move it.

Ralph Lorenz of Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory has studied the sailing stones since 2007. His real interest was a NASA project looking at desert whirlwinds on Earth and Mars, but conveniently the sensors for this were only needed in summer, so he brought them to Racetrack Playa each winter to monitor the stones.

Until this year the results were disappointingly negative. Having moved three years out of five in the 1960s, the rocks seemed reluctant to move at all. Lorenz and his team suspected that climate change might have tipped a delicate balance so the exact conditions were no longer occurring, pushing the mystery out of reach forever.

Then, this January, Lorenz had an email from a park ranger that a tourist had seen the rocks move. Lorenz and his team rushed to Racetrack Playa, where GPS tracking confirmed that some of the rocks had moved up to 70m (230ft) over the course of half an hour.

As Lorenz watched the floating ice sheet melting in the morning sun, he felt the wind pick up to about 10mph (16km/h). There was a crack as a section of the ice sheet broke free and slowly glided forward. It ran into the boulders, "bulldozing some rocks and leaving others".

The mystery of Racetrack Playa is now officially solved. Those who thought it was a hoax, and those who claimed the paranormal was at work were both wrong. Once more peculiar but ultimately orthodox science triumphed.

The mystery in Racetrack Playa was enhanced by the fact that visitors tended to see the boulders at times when there was no water or ice, like a conjuring trick in which the secret apparatus has been removed. Where the involvement of the elements is more likely to be a factor, the problem is treated as a scientific one from the outset.

A 2011 study of "Boulder Transport by Ice on a St Lawrence Salt Marsh" looked at almost 200 boulders. From five to 12 per cent of them were moved each year, over distances of between 2m (7ft) and 140m (460ft). The boulders averaged three tons, and there were two sorts of movement. Most commonly, the boulders were pushed by ice sheets over short distances, but there were also cases of rafting where the boulders were picked up by ice sheets and carried much further. This included several instances where the boulders had been 'exported' and could no longer be found in the marsh. This meant they had been carried off and dropped in deep water at least 200m (660ft) away, but possibly much further.

The process seems to be quite random; the size of boulders did not affect whether they were moved, and one boulder might be shifted when one next to it stays in place. Ice rafting is now an accepted fact in geological circles and helps explain boulder transport that might otherwise be puzzling. A related effect may also take place on Mars. On the northern plains there are odd polygonal patterns of boulders, and these may be caused by the ratcheting action of underground ice forming and melting with the seasons.

Rocks and ice might also help solve one of the perennial mysteries of Stonehenge. Archæologists generally believe the stones were transported long distances on rollers, but others have doubted whether this is really feasible.

"I receive hundreds of queries about moving Stonehenge's megaliths on ice," Michael Pearson, archæologist at University College, told *National Geographic Magazine*. "This method was apparently used in mediæval China, but the climate of Neolithic Britain – slightly warmer than today – was nowhere near cold enough for long enough for this to be realistic."

However, weather is not the same as climate, and even in a warm period there may have been some cold winters.

Skendleby
Nick BROWN

Beneath the rolling Cheshire countryside dotted with the mansions of the rich and famous something buried for Millenia is beginning to stir.

Skendleby a Christmas haunting by Nick Brown author of Luck Bringer

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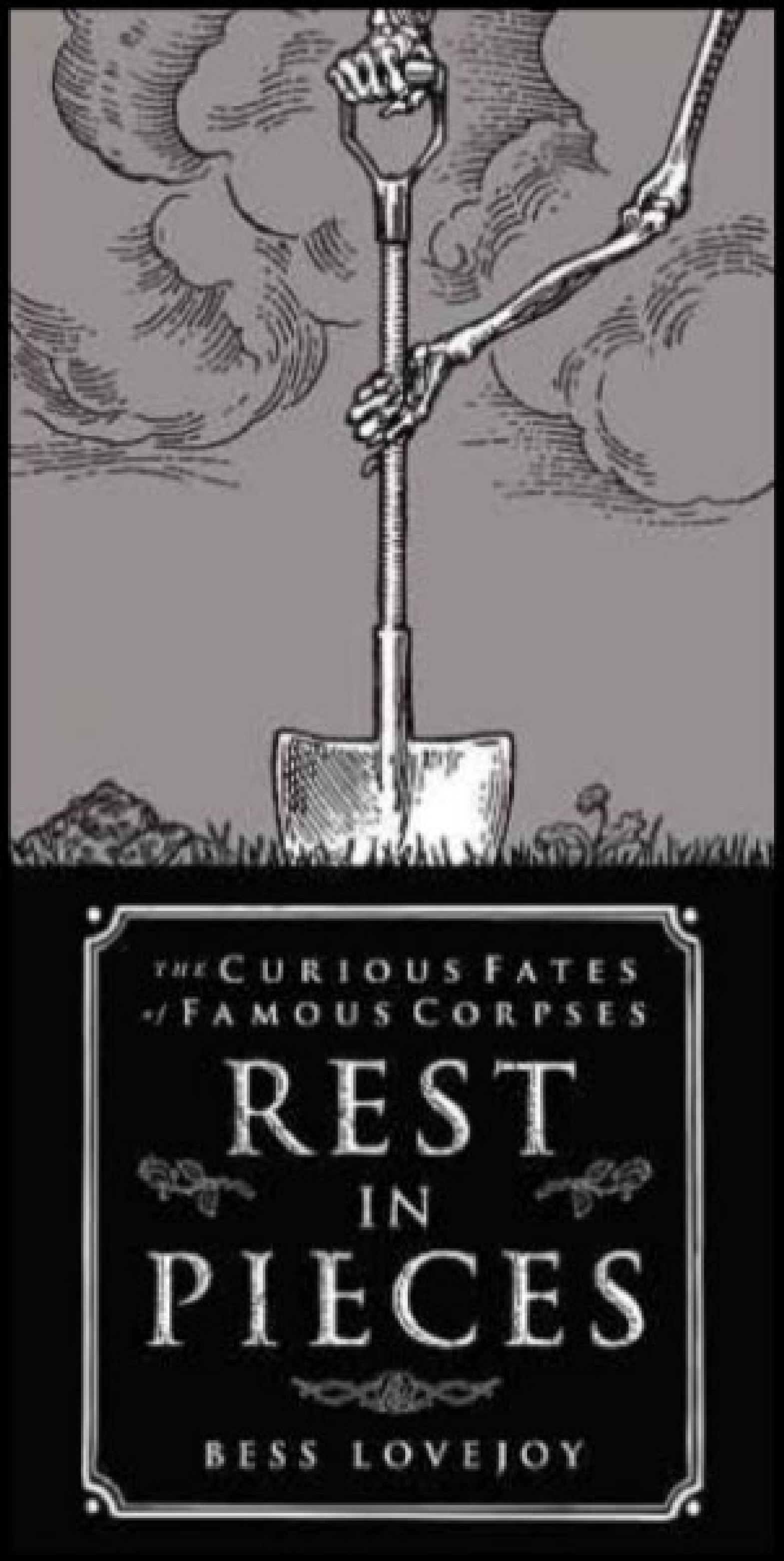

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18

MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE on scientists troubled by incidents whose "unimportance is their importance"

INFREQUENCIES

One does not always need anything nearly as dramatic as a ghastly phantom to establish paranormality. Minor unexplained incidents, which may seem trivial and unimportant, can suffice just as effectively; Harry Price once remarked that the movement of a matchbox a few inches was just as significant as any parade of phantoms (See *Harry Price: The Biography of a Ghost Hunter*, 1950, by Paul Tabori). As CS Lewis remarked of mediæval apparitions and entity stories: "Their unimportance is their importance" in *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964). This is still true today.

No clearer sign of the profound impact a minor event can have on even the most sceptical is demonstrated with an article carried by *Scientific American* on-line in October 2014, written by Michael Shermer. As a founding publisher of the *Skeptic Magazine* and author of a number of books produced in defence of reason and rationality, Shermer has impeccable sceptical credentials. Indeed, back in 2008 he wrote an article entitled "Patternicity: Finding Meaningful Patterns in Meaningless Noise" about the phenomena of 'pareidolia', or the perception of images or sounds in random stimuli. This was a theme explored in his book 2000 book *How We Believe*, where he argued that human brains "are belief engines: evolved pattern-recognition machines that connect the dots and create meaning out of the patterns that we think we see in nature". Among incidents he believed could thus be dismissed by this theory were the claims of "paranormalists [who] hear dead people speaking to them through a radio receiver" (www.scientificamerican.com/article/patternicity-finding-meaningful-patterns/). It's therefore somewhat ironic, but certainly most interesting, to learn that Michael Shermer now admits to having personal experience of just this phenomenon – an incident which he dates precisely to 25 June 2014 and which has left his scepticism shaken.

The day in question started off as one which was very important and memorable for a wholly different reason for Shermer – it was the day he married his wife Jennifer Graf, from Köln, Germany. He states that she was raised by her mother, and that a grandfather named Walter was the closest father figure she had growing up. Unfortunately, he died when she was 16.

Three months before their wedding, Jennifer had some belongings of Walter shipped to the USA. Among the cargo which survived the trip was a Phillips 070 transistor radio manufactured in 1978. On its arrival Shermer duly attempted to put the radio into working order "after decades of muteness". He put in new batteries and opened it up; he even admits to banging it ("percussive maintenance" he terms it) but nothing could get it to function, so he put it away in the back of a desk drawer in their bedroom.

Come their wedding day, following legal formalities in the local court house, the couple returned to their home to conduct their own ceremony of vows and exchanging rings with his family present. He states that Jennifer, separated from family and friends in Germany, was feeling rather lonely, and she "wished her grandfather were there to give her away". Whispering that she wanted to say something to Shermer in private, she retired with him to the back of the house, only to be surprised by hearing music emanating from their bedroom. Searching their bedroom for anything that could be producing the music drew a blank. Then Shermer states: "At that moment Jennifer shot me a look I haven't seen since the supernatural thriller *The Exorcist* startled audiences. 'That can't be what I think it is, can it?'"

PHILIPS
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On opening up the desk, they found the radio that had belonged to Jennifer's grandfather had sprung to life, playing a romantic love tune. Shermer states: "We sat in stunned silence for minutes. 'My grandfather is here with us,' Jennifer said, tearfully. 'I'm not alone.'"

Music had also been heard earlier by Shermer's daughter Devin just as the ceremony had been about to start and Shermer reports the radio continued playing into the night but ceased the next day, and has been silent ever since.

Shermer was clearly deeply impressed, if not shaken, by this experience, but adds: "In any case, such anecdotes do not constitute scientific evidence that the dead survive or that they can communicate with us via electronic equipment."

(See www.michaelshermer.com/2014/10/infrequencies/#more-4510, Oct 2014)

Now in this I am in partial agreement,

BYRD WILLIAMS

ABOVE: Michael Shermer reported an unusual experience suggestive of communication after death; although he added that anecdotes are not scientific evidence. **TOP:** A Phillips 070 transistor radio from 1978.

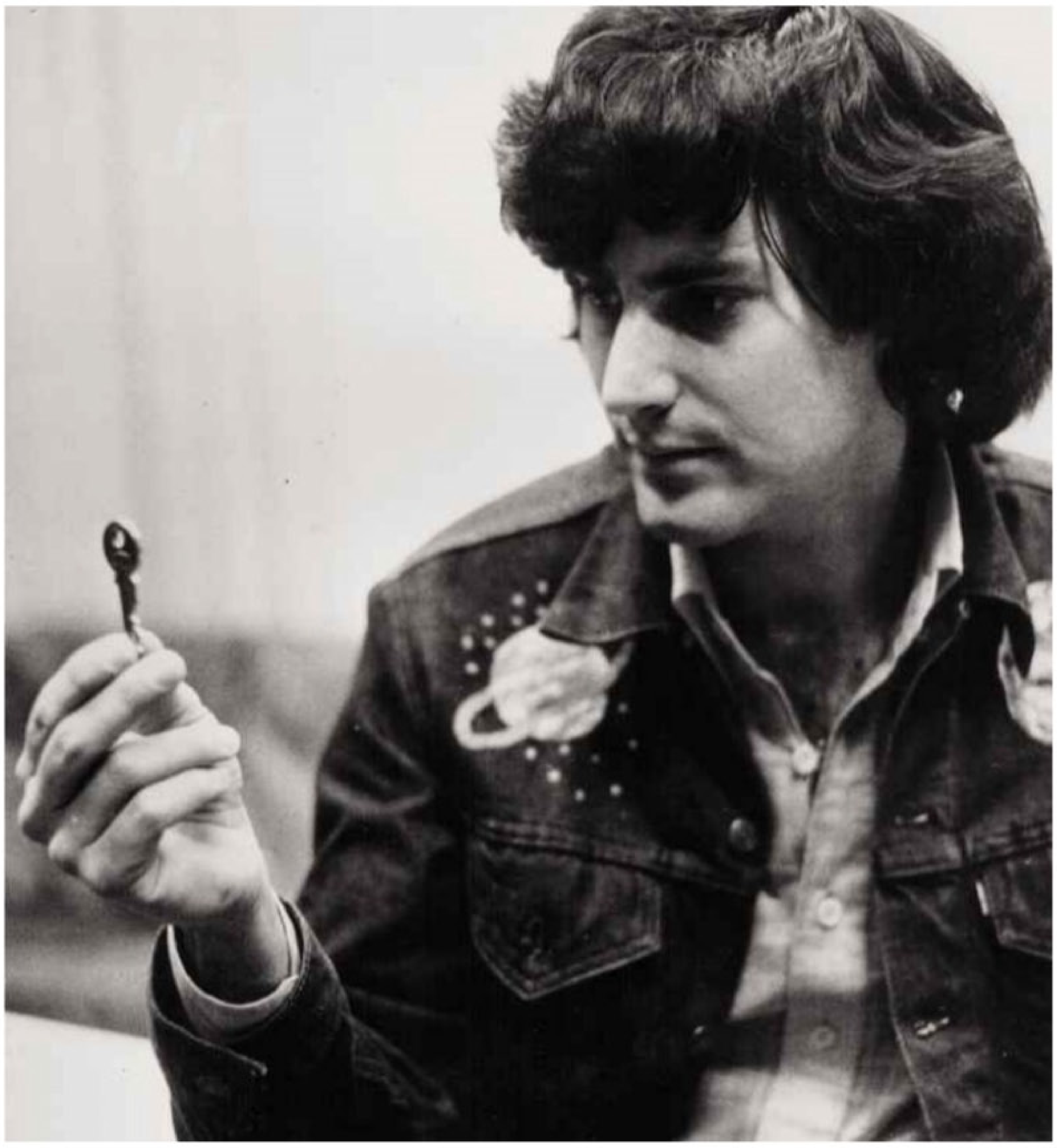
in that we should be wary of leaping to an immediate conclusion that his new wife's dead grandfather was engaged in making the transistor radio function. However, we are left with the problem of how the radio began working again, and the possibility of psychokinesis might be considered.

Certainly, scientists are not immune from such strange physical incidents and it would be interesting to make a collection. One candidate for inclusion would be physicist Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958) reputedly associated with numerous incidents of equipment mysteriously breaking down in laboratories. (See *The Challenge of Chance* (1973) by Alister Hardy, Robert Harvie and Arthur Koestler).

A case of a scientist troubled by domestic psychic effects is recorded in a controversial paranormal classic, *The Metal Benders* (1981) by John Hasted (1921-2002), Professor of Experimental Physics and Head of Department at Birkbeck College. During the spoon-bending craze of the 1970s, Hasted conducted numerous experiments in psychokinesis. In chapter 16 he describes how his home in Surrey was troubled by minor poltergeist incidents after a visit from Uri Geller in November 1974. During Geller's visit a small ivory statuette seemingly moved by itself (stories of incidents like this surrounding Geller have circulated for many years), but peculiar incidents persisted after Geller left. Objects disappeared and re-appeared, always in the presence of Hasted's wife Lynn. The couple did not conclude that a ghost was about, but wondered if an ability to move objects had been induced in Lyn.

Notably the key of a Buhl clock moved by itself and whenever they handled the key in a certain way it seemed to provoke a mysterious reaction in the clock, which would seemingly chime in response. The Hasteds found they could trigger paranormal clock chimes, and as long as the chimes continued, no other objects moved. Hasted recorded: "We invited several groups of observers – from my own physics department, from the Society for Psychical Research and from the editorial staff of the science journal *Nature* – to see and hear the evidence". Unfortunately, Hasted didn't give further details of these observations – but does recount on 23 December 1974 how turkey liver was mysteriously taken out of a bag of giblets stuffed inside a seasonal Christmas bird and materialised on the kitchen table. He stated: "I did not keep the liver for pathological examination, but I did check with our butcher that it was actually a turkey liver."

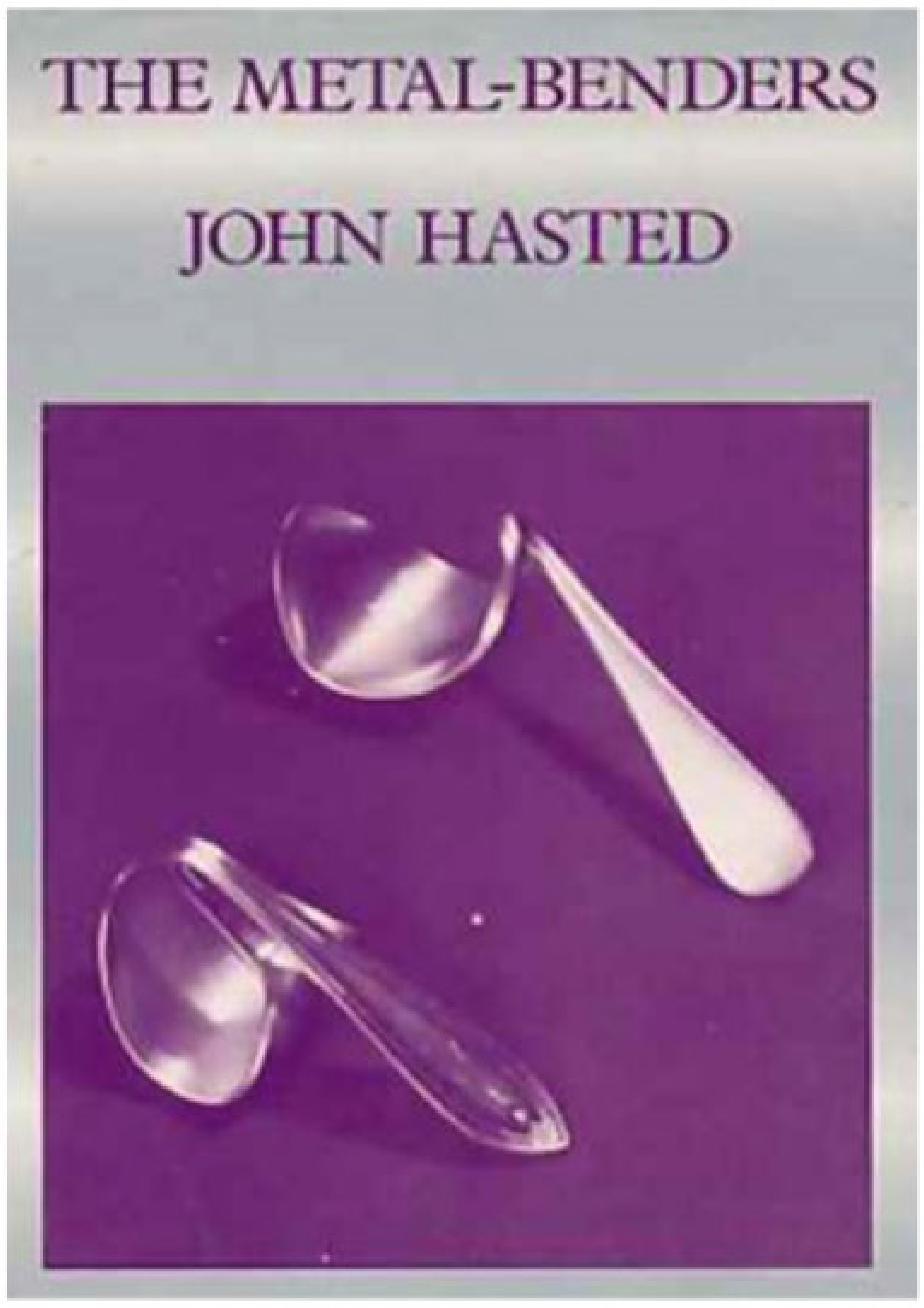
The problem with such evidence is not so much the one-off nature of these incidents but the broader one of many topics in parapsychology still being described in terms of Thomas S Kuhn's "pre-paradigmatic science". As Sir Karl Popper put it: "A scientist engaged in a piece of research, say in physics, can attack his problem straight away. He can go at once to the heart of the matter: that is to the heart of an organised structure. For a structure of scientific doctrines is already in existence, and with it, a generally accepted problem". (Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934). This is not the case with psi research.



HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A 1974 visit from metal-bender Uri Geller sparked odd events in the household of Professor of Experimental Physics John Hasted.

DURING GELLER'S VISIT A SMALL IVORY STATUETTE SEEMINGLY MOVED BY ITSELF



THE METAL-BENDERS

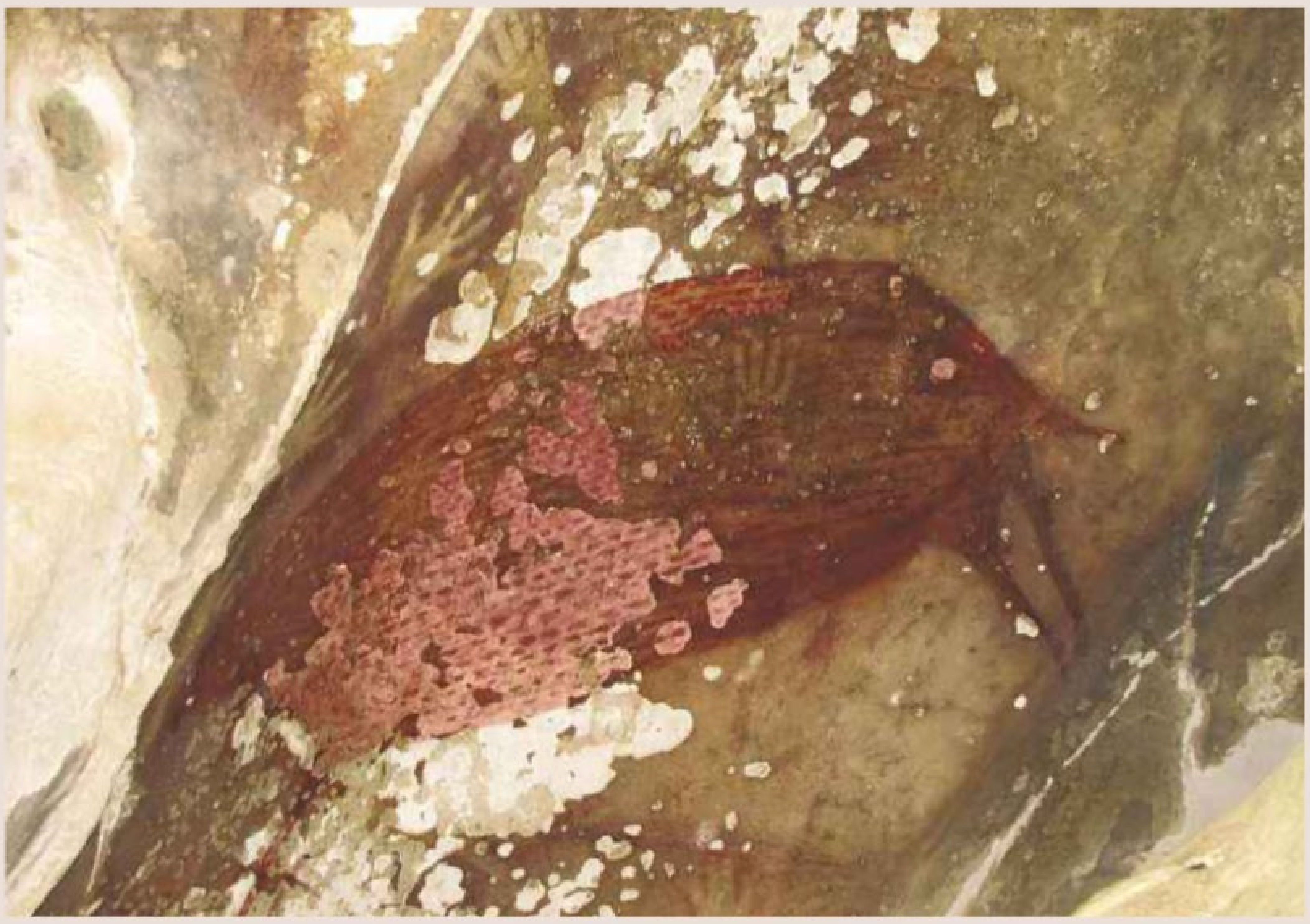
JOHN HASTED

Individually such cases may not appear significant, but comparative studies can be made of collections. One of the first was by Dr Louisa Rhine, who found such incidents were not infrequent and consistent patterns were detectable (*Hidden Channels of the Mind*, 1969). In 1991 veteran psychical researcher Mary Rose Barrington dubbed these minor physical events 'jotts' (an acronym for 'Just-One-Of-Those-Things'). 'Jotts' cover "maddening little episodes… things that do not fit into any prevailing paradigm… the moment a jott happens it is almost immediately discounted, discarded, in most cases forgotten and ultimately repudiated." (see *The Psi-Researcher* No 3, Oct 1991) Many are recorded in the literature of synchronicity, often occurring at moments of emotional intensity or symbolism. Thus births, deaths, weddings, funerals – and perhaps Christmas – can all generate such manifestations, easily interpreted as signs from ghosts and spirits.

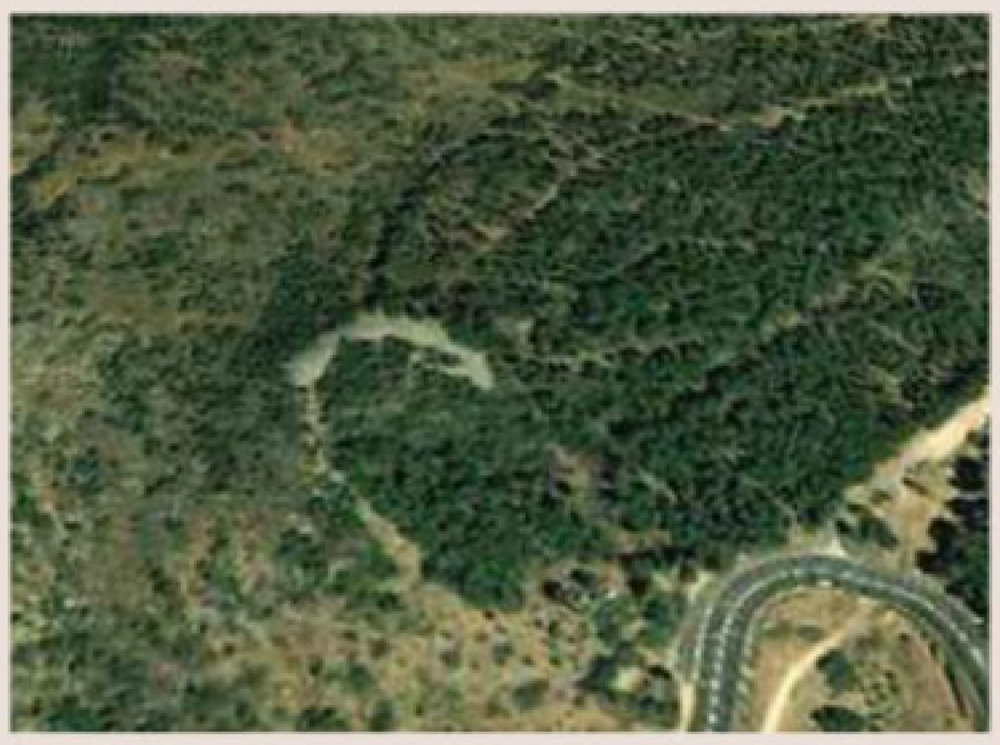
MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING reports on new Indonesian contenders for the title of world's oldest artworks, a massive and mysterious stone structure discovered in the Holy Land and some recent Roman finds unearthed in Britain



BOTH PHOTOS: ANTHONY DOSETTO



LEFT: The landscape of Maros, where the cave art was found, including hand stencils and a wild pig. **ABOVE:** The crescent-shaped stone structure, about eight miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

THANKS TO CAVE POPCORN

Cave paintings as old as any in Europe have been found in Indonesia around 8,000 miles (13,000km) away, requiring art history to be rewritten. Animal drawings and hand stencils, the earliest of which has been dated to almost 40,000 years BP (before present), were discovered on the island of Sulawesi. Currently the world's oldest dated cave art is a red disc or dot found in the El Castillo cave in Cantabria, northern Spain, which was painted 40,800 years BP, probably not long after modern man arrived in Europe [**FT294:22**]. The animal paintings at the famed Chauvet and Lascaux cave sites in France are more recent – between about 32,000 and 18,000 years BP.

Thomas Sutikna of Australia's University of Wollongong, co-author of a report of the Sulawesi art in the journal *Nature*, said rock art was "one of the first indicators of an abstract mind – the onset of being human as we know it. Rock art might have emerged independently at about the same time in early modern human populations in Europe and Southeast Asia, or it might have been widely practised by the first modern humans to leave Africa tens of thousands of years earlier – if so, then animal art could have much deeper origins."

The team studied 14 cave paintings, mostly done with red ochre (ironstone hæmatite), at seven limestone cave sites near Maros in the south west of Sulawesi. These were in fact discovered in the 1950s, but dismissed as less than 10,000 years old because scientists thought older paintings could not possibly survive in a tropical climate. Twelve are hand stencils (very like the ones in Cantabria) and two are naturalistic depictions, one of a *babirusa*, or 'pig-deer', and the other probably of a pig. They were dated by measuring radioactive uranium isotopes in small stalactite-like growths nicknamed 'cave popcorn' which had formed over them. Using this high-precision method, known as U-series disequilibrium, samples from the paintings were shown to range in age from 39,900 to 17,400 years BP.

As the cave popcorn grew on top of the paintings, the U-series dates only provide *minimum* ages for the art, which could be far older. So one of the hand stencils is at least 39,900 years BP, making it the oldest such stencil in the world, while the *babirusa* has a minimum age of 35,400 years, making it one of the oldest figurative depictions in the world, if not the oldest. There are also paintings in a cave in the regency of Bone, 60 miles (100km) north of Maros. These cannot be dated because there is no cave popcorn, but they are probably the same age as the Maros paintings, being stylistically identical. Dr Adam Brumm, co-leader of the Sulawesi research, believes many well-known sites in Asia and Australia contain art that is extremely old but which has not yet been accurately dated. *BBC News, 8 Oct; [R] irishexaminer.com, 9 Oct 2014.*

LUNAR TEMPLE?

A massive lunar-crescent-shaped stone monument has been found about 8 miles (13km) northwest of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. Its volume is about 14,000m^3 (almost 500,000ft^3) and it has a length of about 150m (492ft). It is 20m (66ft) wide at its base, and is preserved to a height of 7m (23ft). Associated pottery indicates a date between 3050 BC and 2650 BC. Today, people living in the area call it by its Arabic name, Rujum en-Nabi Shua'ayb, and it is sometimes referred to as the 'Jethro Cairn', a reference to the Druze prophet Jethro, who is important in local folklore.

Archaeologists previously thought the structure was part of a city wall, but recent excavation found no sign of a city beside it

– the structure is a stand-alone monument that would have been a prominent landmark. The lunar crescent is a symbol of an ancient Mesopotamian moon god named Sin, and an ancient town called Bet Yerah (which translates to "house of the moon god") is located 18 miles (29 km) away – about a day's walk. However, it's uncertain whether the town bore this name 5,000 years ago; the name was recorded in 1,500-year-old Jewish rabbinic texts but may date back much earlier. It was a large town with a grid plan and fortification system. Its inhabitants traded with the early kings of Egypt, as seen from several artefacts, including a jug with a hieroglyphic inscription.

Other large stone structures have been found not far from the crescent-shaped monument. Rujum el-Hiri in the Golan Heights, east of the Sea of Galilee, has four circles with a cairn at its centre, and may predate the crescent-shaped structure by several centuries. Another stone monument, a giant cairn that weighs more than 60,000 tons, was discovered recently beneath the waters of the Sea of Galilee. Its date is unknown, but like the crescent-shaped structure, it is located close to Bet Yerah. *Live Science, 15 Sept 2014.*

ROMAN DISCOVERIES

Dr Andrew Birley, director of excavations at Vindolanda fort on Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, has unearthed a 2,000-year-old Roman lavatory seat. It had been perfectly preserved in the anærobic conditions of a muddy trench filled with ancient rubbish. There are many examples of such seats in stone and marble from across the Roman Empire, but this is believed to be the only surviving wooden seat – better suited to a chilly northern location. The site has also revealed everyday items such as letters, shoes and babies' bootees. *Shropshire Star, D.Mail, 28 Aug 2014.*

- Detectorist Laurence Egerton found 22,000 Roman coins buried on the site of a Roman fort and possible villa called Honeyditches, near Seaton in Devon, in November 2013. The copper coins date from AD 260 to AD 348 and were declared treasure at an inquest in September 2014. The lozenge shape of the Seaton Down Hoard suggests the coins were in a fabric or leather bag that has rotted away. The majority are in good condition. Several even larger late Roman hoards have turned up in the UK – such as the 54,951 coins found in Mildenhall, Wiltshire, in 1978 and the 52,503 coins found in Frome, Somerset, in 2010. *[PA] D.Mail, 27 Sept 2014.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

182: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Raw Meat should not be fed to babies" – Fort, *Books*, p18

Fort-ifying foodstuffs fall from the sky: beef, butter, and the heaven-sent white stuff that (Fort, p53) Persian peasants baked into "a passable, though insipid, bread". A clear case of *To The Manna Born* (step forward, Peter Bowles and Penelope Keith).

Earliest (c. 1700 BC) recipe books in Akkadian, translated and tested by Jean Bottéro (see online sites) include such delicacies as grasshoppers *en brochette* for the royal palate. Bottéro in Gordon Ramsay mode concludes: "I would not wish such meals on any save my worst enemies."

Same goes for their beer laced with pomegranates. Equally unappealing is the Homeric heroes' regular tipple: Pramnian wine sprinkled with goat's cheese – Bronze Age plonk.

Any Hittite cook with dyslexia would have trouble following this typical recipe (full text in Richard Ashdowne & Ina Doettinger, *A Year of Cakes*, 2004, p55: "[T]U7 pár-su-u-la-a-an T[U]7[a]-ku-wa-as-sa TU[7] a-a-an [TU7du-ni-sa" = Soups with crumbs & soups to drink, warm soup.

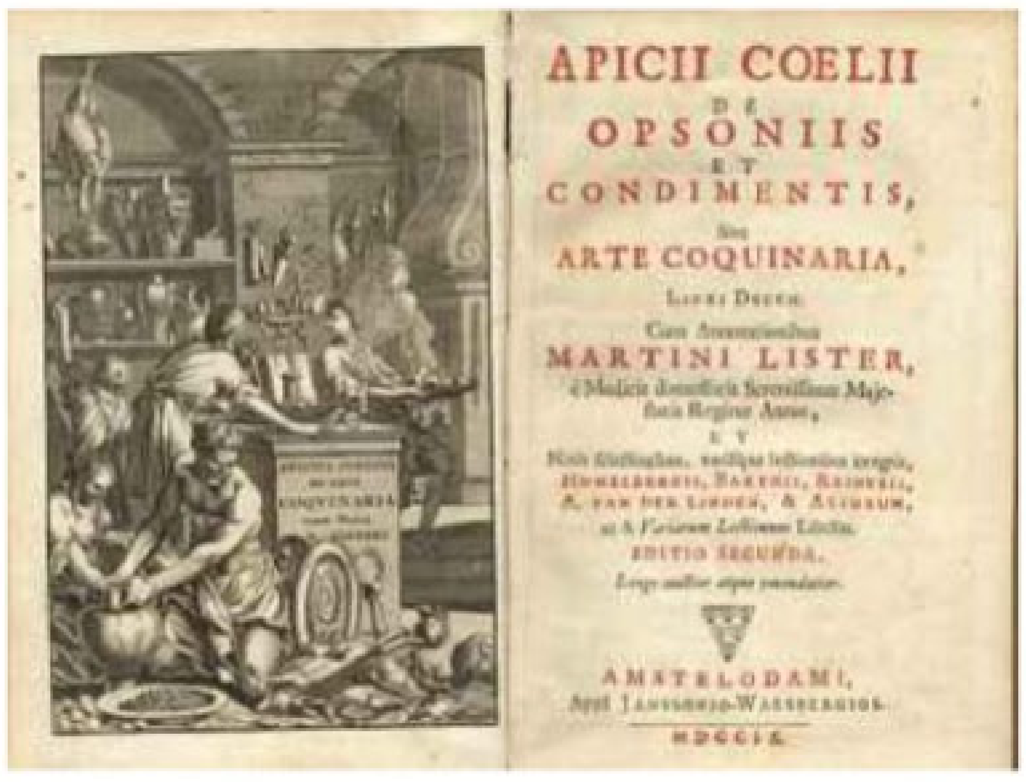
Leviticus's stringent food prohibitions include (11.29) geckos, lizards, sand reptiles, and suchlike – how many Israelites really went in for these? Kyle Butt's 'Flawless Food Laws' (online) hails Leviticus as the most scientific piece of ancient dietary writing.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist scoffs wild locusts in honey while Christ works wonders with instant wedding vino and emergency bulk deliveries of bread and fish.

The most famous Greek cookbook was *The Life of Luxury*, penned by Sicilian Greek Archestratus c. 330 BC, in verse. Sixty-two fragments are preserved in Athenæus's *Learned Men at Dinner*. The emphasis is on fish. Big ones. One extract dwells on a conger stretching over nine tables and an eel that two trained athletes had trouble lifting – size did matter.

Juvenal's Fourth Satire (c. AD 100) describes a gigantic mullet sent to the Emperor Domitian, causing an emergency cabinet meeting on how to cook it whole. Decision: fetch a skilled potter to knock up a colossal casserole – dish rather than dished.

Actual ancient comestibles can be archæologically poignant, e.g. the 81 bread loaves abandoned in a Pompeian bakery – "almost 2,000 years overcooked" (Mary Beard, *Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, 2008, p172).



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The one surviving Roman cookbook goes under the name of Apicius, notorious gourmand in Tiberius's day, though actually a much later compilation – early example of promotional big names. Story goes that Apicius, having eaten through his fortune, starved himself to death – can't decide if this was logical or illogical – rather than be reduced to plain fare.

Strong emphasis on the *ersatz*, e.g. recipe for 'Patina of Anchovy Without Anchovies' and the concluding plaudit to another elaborate concoction: "At table, no one will know what they are eating." Don't be put off by Prefatory admission in the 1958 translation by Barbara Flower and Elizabeth Rosenbaum that after trying all Apicius's recipes out, Flower died.

From mediæval times on, a popular breakfast in England and Germany was beer soup – must have kept them ale and hearty.

Would also help to wash down such horrors as Marzipan Bacon, described in former Fat Lady Clarissa Dickson Wright's *A History of English Food* (2011).

Many of the recipes in Sir Kenelm Digby's (**FT215:19**) 31-word-titled 1671 cookbook are attributed to Sir This and Lady That – did the nobs really spend more time Downstairs rather than Up? One recipe for Meath claims an old gaffer who drank nothing else "was of an excellent vigour every way, and had every year a child, had always a good appetite, yet was not fat" – talk about Multivitamins.

A bit earlier, Ben Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon was dreaming of guzzling "the swelling unctuous paps of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off..."

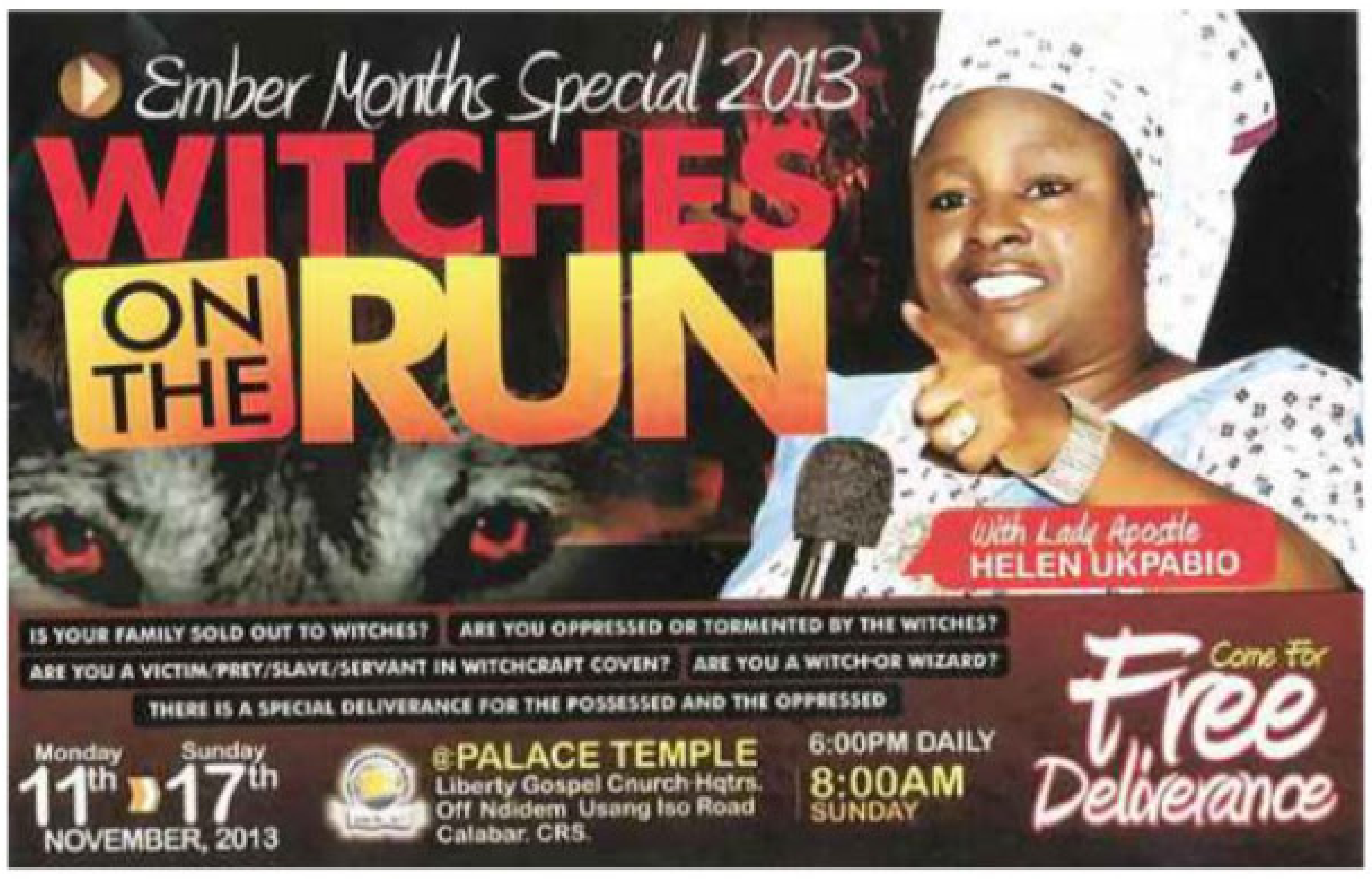
Eighteenth-century recipes would make modern nutritionists swoon, e.g. Elizabeth Raffald's wedding-cake with half a pint of brandy and 32 eggs, surpassed by Eliza Smith's 35-egg seed cake requiring two hours of continuous hand-beating.

After all this, what about a nice cuppa? Samuel Johnson once downed 16 cups at a sitting; Tony Benn is credited with 18 pints a day; Edgar Wallace put himself in an early grave (John Sutherland, *Lives of the Novelists*, 2011) by swigging a daily 20 cups of heavily sweetened brew.

T(ea)T(ea)FN

IT’S WITCHCRAFT!

Liberia’s ‘dark world’, Nigerian witch-finder threatens to sue and street corner child exorcisms in Croydon


Ember Months Special 2013
WITCHES ON THE RUN
With Lady Apostle
HELEN UKPABIO
IS YOUR FAMILY SOLD OUT TO WITCHES?
ARE YOU OPPRESSED OR TORMENTED BY THE WITCHES?
ARE YOU A VICTIM/PREY/SLAVE/SERVANT IN WITCHCRAFT COVEN?
ARE YOU A WITCH OR WIZARD?
THERE IS A SPECIAL DELIVERANCE FOR THE POSSESSED AND THE OPPRESSED
Monday 11th
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NOVEMBER, 2013
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Calabar. CRS.
6:00PM DAILY
8:00AM SUNDAY
Come For
Free Deliverance

GROWING UP FAST

A singular story is reported from Liberia in West Africa, currently in the terrifying grip of Ebola. On 23 September, Lorpu Kollie, a 16-year-old mother from Foquelleh, a town in the Panta District of Bong County, was on her way to “the farm” with her two-month-old son, Smith Freeman, tied to her with her *lappa* [Hausa for shawl or wrap], when the baby told her to put him down. She ignored him and carried on, but as she approached some crossroads, he repeated his command and she complied. He immediately began to turn into a “full-grown man”, and told her that he was going home since his grandmother, Gormah Kollie, Lorpu’s mother, was constantly “raining insults” on him. “He even threatened to bring incense and garlic into the home”.

This seems to be contracted later in the news report when Lorpu is quoted as saying: “The boy told me that he was going back home because my mother had threatened to bring incense into the house,” adding: “He said his grandmother told him she had the power to drive away any witchcraft.” Anyway, the newly matured infant then snatched the *lappa* and made his way into the bush. Lorpu told a reporter: “This was my first time seeing a two-month-old baby talking so clearly like a five-year-old child.” She emphasised that Smith bore no scar or deformity indicating that he belonged to the “dark world”.

Lorpu had earlier dreamed that she had gone into a town with her baby son and came to a “house without doors”. In the dream, young Smith explained that they could find their way in by “leaning on the house”. He then served food to guests and forbad her to tell the dream to anyone – but she disobeyed and told her mother Gormah.

Smith’s father, Watson Freeman, said his girlfriend Lorpu had trouble giving birth, and described the mysterious disappearance of his son as “incredible and mind-blowing”, saying he had not suspected he was anything other than a normal human being. Smith’s grandfather, Jerome Kowan, said the whole episode was the “handiwork of the dark world”, and worried that it could stigmatise his daughter and drive away any man who might wish to take her as a future wife. (Why she couldn’t marry Watson Freeman is not addressed.) Meanwhile, local leaders had begun “a traditional investigation into the situation” and advised people who farmed in the area where Smith Freeman vanished “to stay away for a couple of days and observe”. *Daily Observer (Monrovia, Liberia), 25 Sept 2014.*

BEWARE ‘LADY APOSTLE’!

A notorious Nigerian witch-finder has attempted to silence her critics with a humungous lawsuit. Helen Ukpabio (above), a born-again Christian preacher, founded the Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries in Calabar, Nigeria, in 1992. This church now has major branches in Cameroon, Ghana and South Africa, as well as Nigeria. Ukpabio claims to have been betrothed to Satan as a teenager before being rescued from a cult at the age of 17, and is known for ‘deliverance sessions’ to free the afflicted from demonic possession. Among her advice to parents is the warning that children under two who cry in the night with a fever may be “possessed with black, red and vampire witchcraft spirits”.

Ukpabio, who calls herself ‘Lady Apostle’, is threatening to sue a number of organisations, including the British Humanist Association (BHA) and the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN), for £500 million. She accused them of defamation, in part due to a difference in wording. Campaigners have accused Ukpabio, in her book *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*, of writing “a child under two years of age that cries at night and deteriorates in health is an agent of Satan”; but according to her solicitors, her actual words describe how such children can be possessed by “vampire witchcraft spirits” with signs of these being a child who “screams at night, cries, is always feverish, suddenly deteriorates in health, puts up an attitude of fear, and may not feed very well”. Besides having to banish mermaids, she teaches that children who stamp their feet may be “trying to make signs… to communicate with gnomes, the witchcraft spirit in charge of the earth.”

Ukpabio has made a number of films, the most famous being *End of the Wicked*, in which child actors are shown to murder their parents and eat human flesh. In 2008 a *Dispatches* programme by the UK broadcaster Channel 4 stated that her views had led to a massive upsurge of children stigmatised and abandoned by their families in West Africa, particularly in Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. The Home Office revoked the witch-finder’s visa after she held a number of services during a visit to London in April this year. Campaigners had called for her to be banned from Britain on child protection grounds.

“The activities of self-styled exorcists who stigmatise children as witches, vampires or whatever, and subject them to sadistic rites of demonic expulsion, are criminal, and constitute a deep embarrassment to the nation,” said Nobel prize-winning Nigerian author Professor Wole Soyinka. “That their activities are carried out under a religious banner exposes them as heartless cynics, playing on the irrational fears of the gullible.” *Independent, 15 April, 2 Sept; humanism.org.uk, 1 Sept 2014.*

CROYDON DAWN RITUALS

In September there was a series of 20-minute ‘child exorcisms’ between 4am and 6am near the South Norwood Leisure Centre in Croydon, south London. Each time, the child was told to stand still in the centre of a circle

GRANT MELTON / LOCAL WORLD

ABOVE: One of a series of ‘child exorcisms’ conducted in Croydon in September.

while the group chanted "Get the demon out!" (and suchlike). A local resident said: "It's loud enough to wake me up and I'm at least 200ft [60m] away from where they hold these things." After reciting the Lord's Prayer, they all drive off. At the time of the news report, it was not known if the same child was the focus on each occasion or if there were several different children. The police attended on the latest occasion (25 September), but there were no allegations of criminal behaviour. "We are continuing with our enquiries," said a police spokesman. *dailymail.co.uk, 26 Sept; D.Mail, D.Mirror, 27 Sept 2014. 2014.*

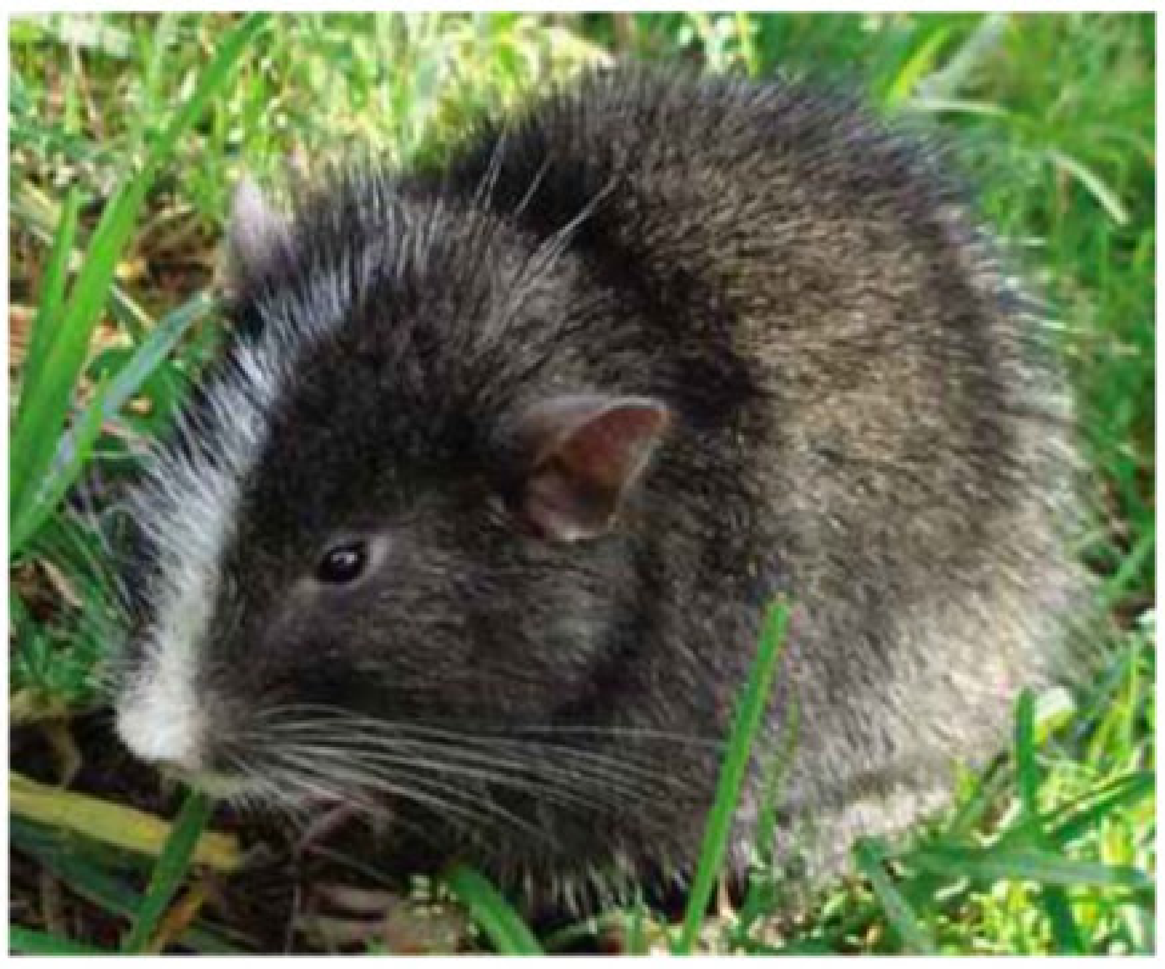
WITCHCRAFT 'CLEANSING' ON THE RISE

Since 2004, 148 cases of ritual child abuse linked to witchcraft have been referred to the Metropolitan Police in London, part of a marked upward trend: nine cases in 2011, then 19 in 2012, 24 in 2013, and 27 in 2014 up to October. Many more are thought to remain "hidden" in families and communities. Examples include children being raped, ducked in water, swung around by a pastor and smacked to "drive out the devil", having chili rubbed into their eyes or being made to drink noxious "cleansing" liquids.

High-profile cases include the murder of 15-year-old Kristy Bamu in east London, accused of using witchcraft, tortured and drowned by his sister and her boyfriend on Christmas Day 2010; and Victoria Climbié, aged eight, beaten, burned with cigarettes and forced to sleep in a bin liner in a bath. She died in February 2000. Her great-aunt Marie Thérèse Kouao and her boyfriend Carl Manning claimed she was possessed and were found guilty of her murder in 2001. The same year, on 21 September, the limbless torso of a young boy, named 'Adam' by the police, was found floating in the Thames near Tower Bridge. A decade later, he was identified as a Nigerian boy named Patrick Erhabor (initially called Ikpomwosa), the victim of a ritual killing [**FT155:29, 277:22**]. *BBC News, (London) Evening Standard, Independent.co.uk, 8 Oct 2014.*

ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden



ROBERTO QUISPE

RESURRECTED FROM THE INCAS' TOMBS

Back in 1912, items of pottery present inside some Inca tombs at Machu Picchu, southwest of Cusco, Peru, were found to contain various remains of an enigmatic species of large arboreal rodent subsequently dubbed *Cuscomys oblativus*, and allied to the Andean chinchilla rats (genus *Abrocoma*). Its presence inside the tombs' pottery has led some researchers to speculate that specimens of this furry cat-sized animal may have been kept as pets and deliberately buried with their deceased owners, but as no living examples had ever been reported, it was assumed that this species was long extinct.

In April 1997, however, a single specimen of a hitherto unknown, closely related species was chanced upon by Smithsonian Institution mammalogist Dr Louise H Emmons during a research visit to a previously unexplored area of Peru's Vilcabamba Mountains. While there, she startled an Andean weasel, which promptly fled after dropping its newly captured prey – the mysterious rodent – at her feet! Two years later, she formally described her serendipitous discovery, naming it *Cuscomys ashaninka*, the Asháninka arboreal chinchilla rat, honouring the region's native Asháninka people. Its finding led Emmons to speculate that perhaps its tomb-preserved relative *C. oblativus* may not be extinct after all, but simply very elusive and awaiting rediscovery.

In 2009, ranger Roberto Quispe photographed a large unidentified rodent at Machu Picchu. Superficially similar to *C. ashaninka* but clearly belonging to a different species, it lent further hope, but could not be confirmed as no tissue samples were taken. In 2012, a team of scientists led by Horacio Zeballos, the curator of the Department of Mammalogy at Peru's Museum de Arequipa, and Gerardo Ceballos from the Instituto de Ecología of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, decided to investigate this tantalising prospect by exploring the Inca Trail region where the rodent had been seen by Quispe. They finally located a living specimen in the cloud forests close to the archæological site of Wiñayhuayna heading towards Machu Picchu. Extensive studies duly confirmed that it was indeed *C. oblativus*, whose official rediscovery after 500 years of supposed extinction and formal christening as the Machu Picchu arboreal chinchilla rat were publicly revealed in September 2014. *http://news.mongabay.com/2014/0925-hance-inca-rat.html 25 Sept 2014; Karl Shuker, "The Encyclopaedia of New and Rediscovered Animals", 2012.*

JERSEY'S NEW TOAD, WARTS AND ALL

Much closer to home, a vertebrate species entirely new to the British Isles has been discovered in full view on Jersey, largest of the Channel Islands. Jersey is the only member of the latter island group inhabited by toads, whose species had always been assumed by zoologists to be the familiar common toad *Bufo bufo*, native to Great Britain (but not Ireland). However, a new study in which conservationists from the UK and Jersey collaborated with scientists from the Netherlands in relation to genetic, morphological, and field research has revealed that Jersey's toads actually belong to a completely separate species – the western or spiny common toad *Bufo spinosus*. Although it is indigenous to France, Iberia, and North Africa, this species has never previously been recorded anywhere in the British Isles. Having said that, Jersey's inhabitants have long known that their toads were somewhat unusual, due to their larger size, earlier breeding season, and differing habitat relative to the common toads of Great Britain, but no one had suspected that they actually represented a totally different species until now. *www.arc-trust.org/news/latest-news/toads-in-jersey 9 Oct 2014.*

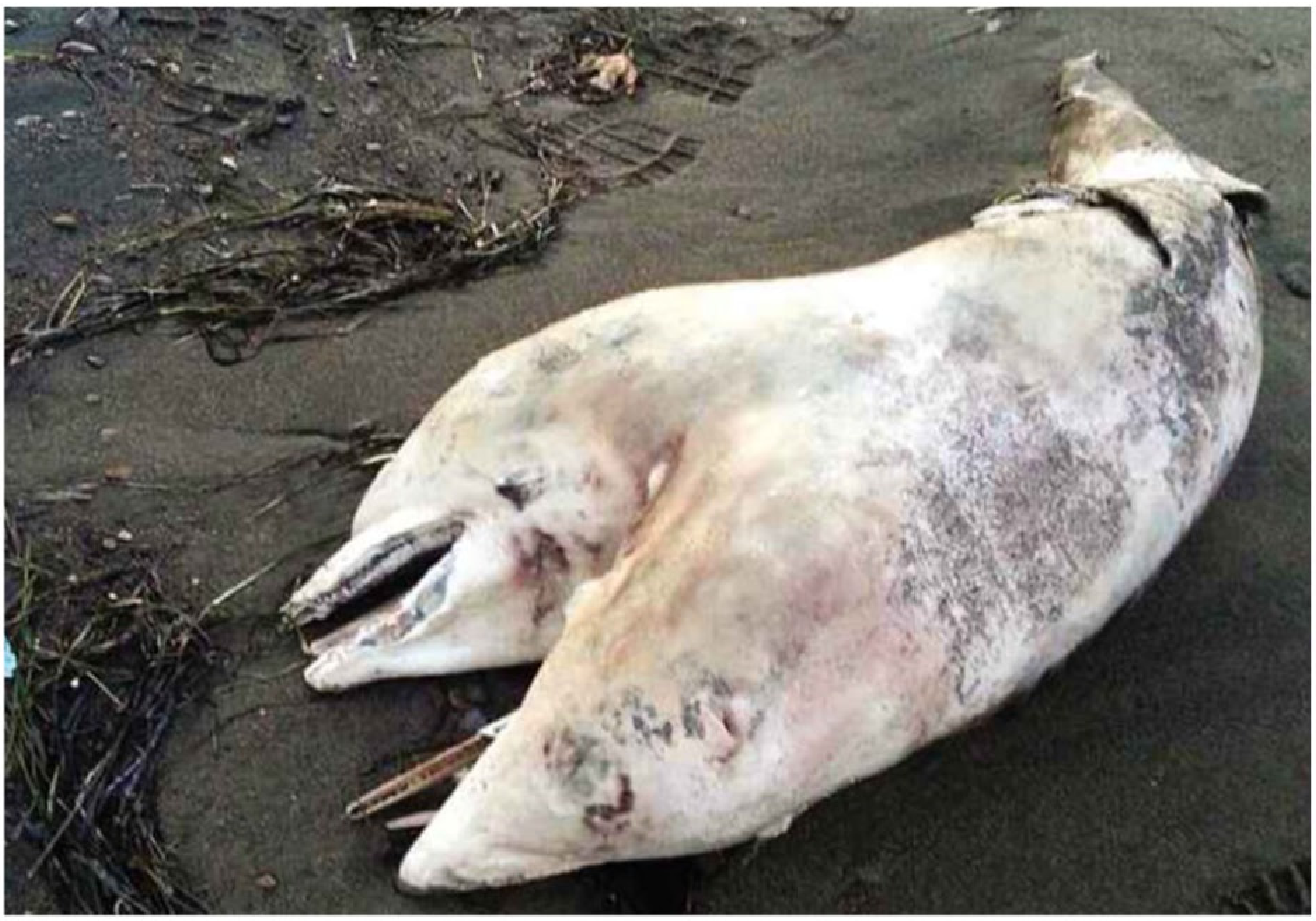
A WHALE OF A FIND, BUT ENDANGERED TOO

What may well be a comparable situation but featuring creatures on a much larger scale, morphologically speaking, has lately been exposed in the Gulf of Mexico off the Florida Panhandle. Fifty specimens of a species of rorqual traditionally deemed to be Bryde's whale *Balaenoptera brydei* live in an underwater chasm here called DeSoto Canyon, but unlike other baleen whales they remain in the Gulf all year long, never migrating elsewhere. Moreover, genetic studies coupled with size differences and their unique call strongly suggest that these 50 individuals constitute either a distinct, hitherto unrecognised subspecies of Bryde's whale, or possibly a completely separate species. If the latter is true, then according to Michael Jasny, director of the marine mammal programme at the USA's Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) currently studying them, this would make their species the world's most endangered whale. Further studies should determine conclusively their true taxonomic status. *www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/50-whales-may-be-a-new-and-very-endangered-species 30 Sept 2014.*

JOLENE BERTOLDI

ANIMAL TALES

TWO-HEADED DOLPHIN, MONKEY MISBEHAVIOUR IN NEW DELHI AND A PAIR OF PRECOCIOUS PARROTS



TUGRUL METIN / AP/ PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

ABOVE: The two-headed dolphin found on a beach in western Turkey. **BELOW**: One of New Delhi's troublesome rhesus macaques.

TWO-HEADED DOLPHIN

A two-headed dolphin has washed up on a beach in western Turkey. The private Dogan news agency said the remains of a conjoined dolphin calf were discovered on 4 August on an Aegean beach in Dikili, near Izmir, by Tugrul Metin, a gym teacher on holiday in the area. It was believed to be a one-year-old calf a metre (3ft 3in) long.

Associate professor Mehmet Gokoglu from the marine-biology department at Akdeniz University, Antalya, said he welcomed the opportunity to study the strange dolphin, adding: "Such a dolphin is a very rare occurrence – similar to the occurrence of conjoined human twins". Last year, scientists from the Michigan State University discovered what they believe to be the first-ever two-headed bull shark. *[AP] dailymail.co.uk, 10 Aug; Independent, D.Telegraph, 12 Aug 2014.*

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

MONKEY BUSINESS

For decades, an army of rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) has been causing havoc in New Delhi, the Indian capital, biting civil servants, smashing windows, tearing up files, chewing through telephone and Internet cables, and stealing lunch boxes. The monkeys also get sozzled on stolen whisky and attack fruit vendors in the street. Shooting them has always been ruled out as Hindus associate them with the monkey god Hanuman and traditionally give them food. In 2001, the Indian Government imported langur monkeys (*Semnopithecus entellus*), fearsome-looking but vegetarian natives of Rajasthan and South India. These were leashed around New Delhi in the hope that their intimidating scent would keep their smaller simian cousins at bay (**FT148:14**). Attempts to curb the menace were stepped up in 2007 when macaques killed the city's deputy mayor, knocking him over his balcony. However, in 2013, the use of langurs was banned over concerns of animal cruelty. Officials teamed up with American zoologists to develop schemes to control monkey business by putting them on the pill. They planned to sterilise captured macaques and mix oral contraceptives with food left for them on roads.

This summer, for short-term respite, the authorities hired 40 young men from the Medari caste (who traditionally tame monkeys for human entertainment) to disguise themselves as langurs and scare off the primate pests. Wearing masks, they leap around making loud throaty sounds and intimidating gestures, but within hours the macaques return, often in greater numbers, to re-establish control. Three men daily scour the residential complex of Narendra Modi, the prime minister, and two are assigned to the home of Sonia Gandhi, the Congress Party leader, in Delhi's government zone. If all else fails, marksmen armed with rubber bullets could be deployed, but devotees of Hanuman will be outraged. Men disguised as monkeys remind the Gang of Fort of the notorious protean Monkey Man, a sort of modern Spring-heeled Jack, who caused widespread alarm in many Indian cities in 2001 [**FT148:8-9, 149:7**]. *D.Telegraph, 1+9 Aug; NPR (USA), 5 Aug 2014.*

ROBERT CASILLAS / AP / PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

ABOVE: Nigel, a fluent Spanish speaker after his mysterious four-year absence.
BELOW: Poncho can recite the Hail Mary and sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game".

PARROT VOICES

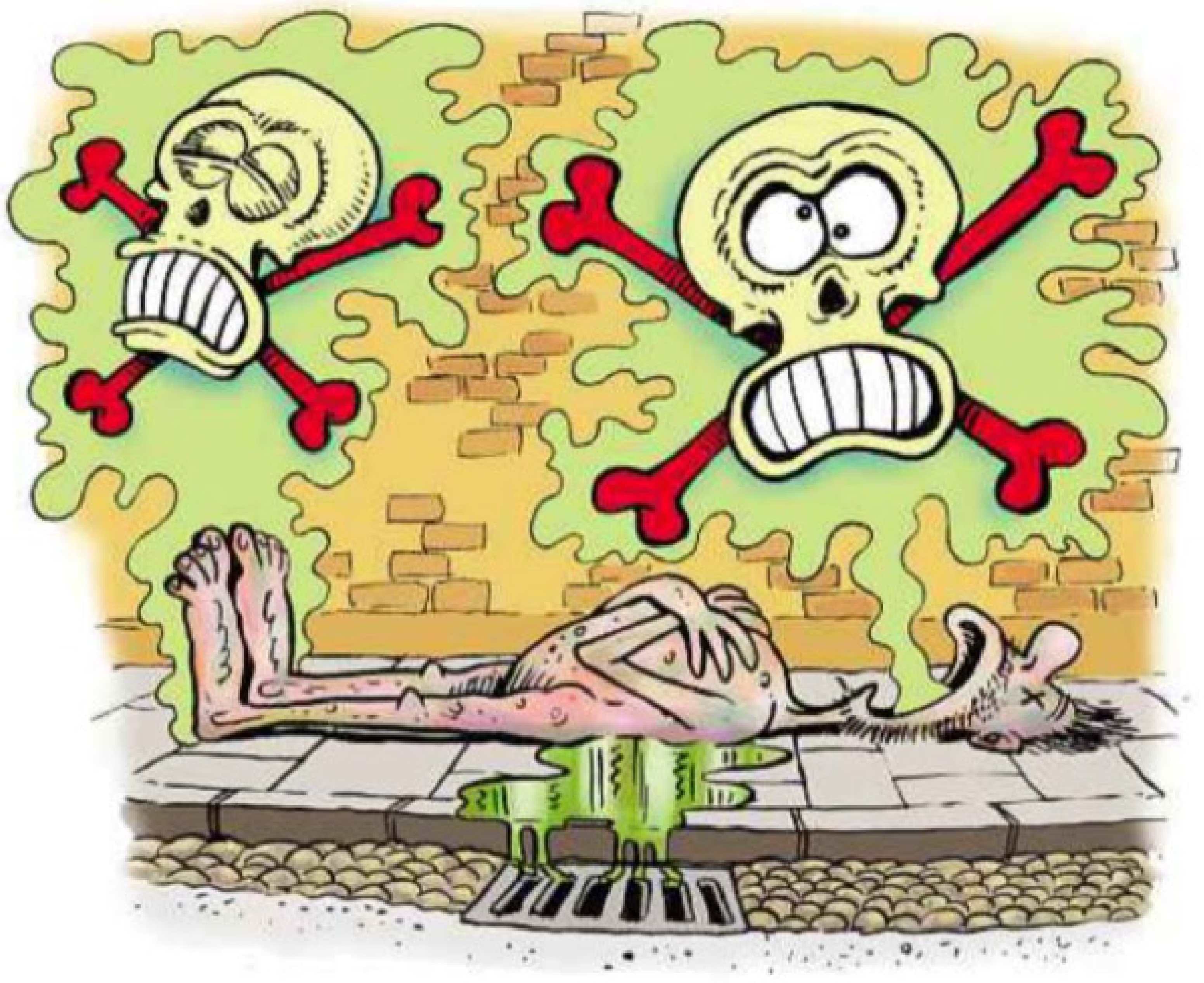
Poncho, a South American quaker parrot, can recite the Hail Mary from start to finish and has become a hit on YouTube. He learnt the prayer while living with a Catholic family in the US. He can also sing "Take Me Out To The Ball Game". Quaker parrots, also known as monk parakeets, are smaller than most parrots but have overtaken cockatiels as the most favoured talking birds because of their high intelligence and ability to speak from an early age. *patheos.com, 27 Sept 2014.*

- Four years after disappearing, a pet parrot has returned home in Torrance, California, having ditched his British accent and switched to Spanish. Nigel, an African Grey parrot, was reunited with his owner, Darren Chick, in early October. It is not clear what happened to him while he was away, although he now frequently calls for someone called Larry. He is said to be well, though he did bite Mr Chick upon their reunion. He was found in the garden of Jonathan and Julissa Sperling, who own a dog-grooming business in Torrance. Mrs Sperling said that when she found Nigel, "he was singing and talking without control... He was barking like the dogs. I'm from Panama and he was saying, 'What happened?' in Spanish." Whilst looking for the bird's owner, the couple saw an online appeal from Teresa Micco, a local vet whose own African Grey had gone missing. When she realised Nigel was not her parrot she managed to link his microchip to Mr Chick. "It's really weird, I knew it was him from the minute I saw him," he said. This is the fifth parrot reunion facilitated by Ms Micco whose own bird has been missing for nine months. *BBC News, 14 Oct 2014.*

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

182: THE DANGEROUS DEAD


HUNT EMERSON

The myth

As every TV news report ever broadcast from a disaster scene reminds us, the main danger following, say, an earthquake is "the bodies piling up in the streets." It's a race against time to get the dead buried, before they cause an epidemic of cholera.

The "truth"

The World Health Organisation brooks no ifs or buts on this: "Epidemics have never arisen from dead bodies". The almost universal belief to the contrary is presumably a hangover from the days of the miasma theory, when disease was thought to spread by means of foul vapours. The cholera bacterium is actually spread through infected shit finding its way to the mouth of the victim, usually via contaminated water. Corpses do not spontaneously generate cholera; if they didn't have it when they were alive, they haven't got it now, and in any case, the bacteria can't live long in a dead body. The truth is more mundane: major disasters tend to disrupt water and sewage services. A sudden lack of clean drinking water means that diseases like cholera can spread much more rapidly than normal. Those involved in emergency relief consider this myth a great pestilence in itself. It causes desperately needed resources to be wasted on the largely harmless dead instead of the endangered living. The use of mass graves increases the chaos and psychological trauma facing survivors. Incidentally, cholera is one of the most easily treated diseases on earth. Oral rehydration sachets, which cost a few pence each, will cure almost all patients. And yet about 100,000 die of cholera annually.

Sources

www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs107/en/; http://s.coop/panho; www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-16/stop-propagating-disaster-myths; www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/30/internationalaidanddevelopment.tsunami2004

Disclaimer

As we always say – FT is not a medical journal. Informed corrections and disagreements are very welcome.

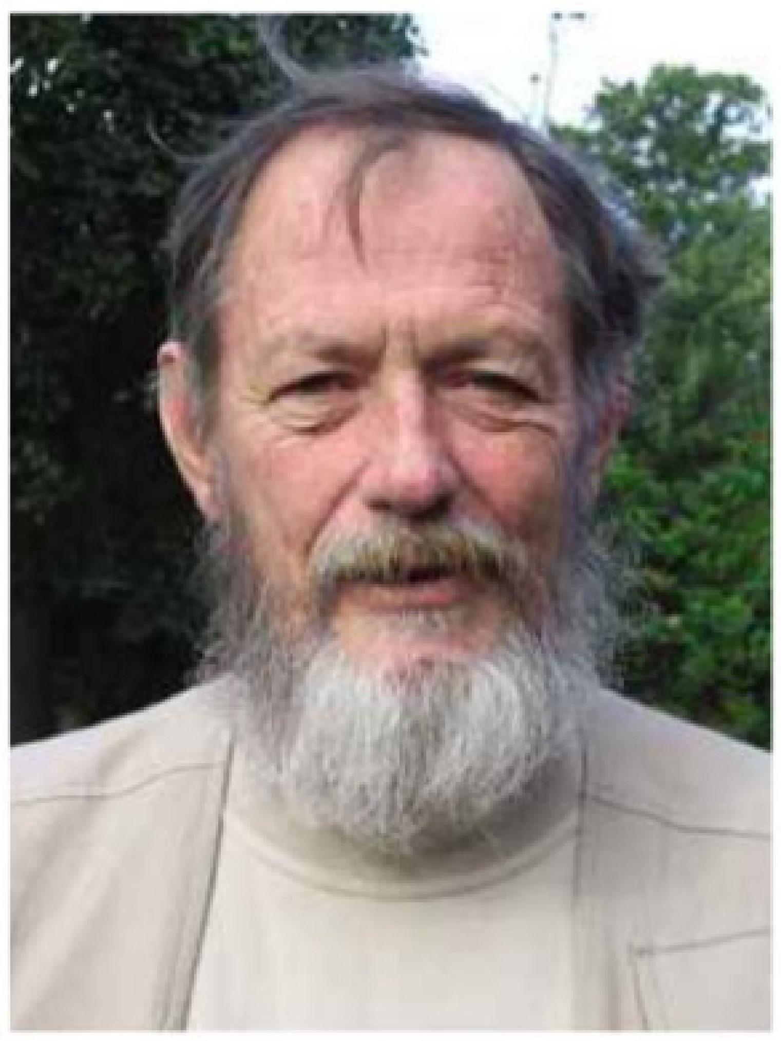
Mythchaser

One of the most popular British pub beers of the 1970s ceased production when it was revealed to be so weak "it could legally be served to children". What is the sober truth of this Well-Known Fact?

DON'T MISS MYTHCONCEPTIONS THE BOOK
OUT NOW ONLINE AND IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

NECROLOG

BOB RICKARD bids farewell to the remarkable Richard Seary, a man whose CV covered everything from FT printer and Hebrew scholar to aid worker and undercover agent



RICHARD SEARY

Richard came into the life of *Fortean Times* in mid-1979 when, as the proprietor of Bija Press in Stroud, Gloucestershire, he helped me put together *FT29* – a special large-format issue with a full-colour cover by Hunt Emerson – which the newsagent WH Smiths took on with a trial of 300 copies in a couple of London outlets. Smiths never did re-order – our history might have been quite different if they had – but from then on Richard contributed occasional articles and continued to be our printer until he went home to Australia in 1988.

Shortly after relocating to Queensland in 2009, he was diagnosed with a terminal illness. It was not his first such diagnosis, but the one he couldn't ignore. He told me he had "a shrivelled liver, a bloated pancreas and spleen, knotty and cyst-filled kidneys, and a diverticular bladder" and joked that he was living "beyond my use-by date". He was born in 1951, in the Paddington area of Sydney, prematurely and, through his early years, was sickly and malnourished. His left lung collapsed when he was 17, necessitating a lobectomy, following which a tainted transfusion infected him with viral hepatitis. Eight years later his right lung also collapsed. He developed diabetes and portal hypertension, and towards the end needed daily dialysis to drain the fluid that leaked from his liver into his peritoneum.

In April 2013, he was laid low by Whitmore's disease (*melioidosis*, a dangerous bacterial infection) from a poorly cooked cassava cake, a gift from a neighbour. Daily, he battled pain, discomfort and tiredness, and was selflessly nursed by his second wife Jennifer, devoting his time to teaching biblical Hebrew, Torah and Jewish studies at the University of the Third Age in Cairns, continuing to write for *FT* and a number of religious, archæological and epigraphy journals and producing a newsletter *Zayith* (Hebrew: 'Olive Tree') for Jews and Christians when he could. He died peacefully at home, from multiple organ failure.

Richard was born with a caul which, besides being a legendary charm against drowning, is said to single out a child for an unusual life [see **FT318:25**]. His father, John Seary, was a professional motorcycle racer and electrical engineer, who reinvented himself each time he appeared in Richard's life, and usually had a new wife or girlfriend in tow. John's elder sister later married Charles Berlitz (author of *The Bermuda Triangle*, etc).

Richard, his two sisters and a brother were left for long periods on their own. In his fifth year, his mother Dora "vanished" while his father was away in Queensland living with another woman, leaving the children to fend for themselves. Alerted by neighbours, the authorities removed them to orphanages. For the next seven years the four children were placed, often separately, with a succession of institutions and distant relatives; for Richard, that included a year in a hospital, alone, recovering from malnutrition and neglect. At that time, he told me, he was regarded as "mentally-retarded and spastic" because he had chosen to remain mute. He did not resume speaking again until he was eight.

In 1963, his father brought the scattered family together in Brisbane. When Richard joined them a year later, he says he did not recognise his siblings. He describes his father's new companion – Shirley Dorothy Bone – as "an undiagnosed sociopath" who, for the next two years, subjected him to "sado-sexual and other abuses". For long periods, often with his father's collusion, Richard says, he was tied up under the house with the dog. He would run away whenever he could, living rough until caught by police and brought back. Eventually he was judged "in need of care and protection" and made a State Ward, spending the next three years in Wilston youth prison, called BoysTown, years he described to me as "the happiest of my childhood". There, a healthy regime and his first experience of formal schooling unleashed his potential. Far from being retarded, he was found to be intelligent but suffering from a form of autism exacerbated by his periods of isolation. Here too, he was nurtured by "a kindly old Catholic priest" who awoke in the boy his latent talent for languages – at first Latin and Greek.

ABOVE: The Gang of Fort in 1983, gathered to stuff envelopes with copies of *Fortean Times* 40, just delivered from our West Country printer by Richard Seary. Left to right: Bob Rickard, Richard Seary, Paul Sieveking, Mike Dash, Steve Moore and Ion Will.

This idyll came to an end in 1966 when, aged 15, Richard was moved to Albion Lodge, a hostel for 'working boys' dominated by gangs of young thugs. He stuck it out for a year, but absconded after he was brutally beaten for not joining in their weekend 'fun' of "drugs, rape and robbery". Travelling to Sydney, he tracked down his mother, but after only two weeks' reconciliation she 'vanished' again. He wandered the Outback – avoiding Queensland, where he was wanted as a fugitive – working on cattle and sheep stations and in mining towns.

In 1969, after learning that he was no longer a fugitive – his State wardship having expired a year earlier – he returned to Sydney and set about educating himself and "losing my hillbilly accent". Wishing to know more of his Jewish ancestry, he learned Hebrew and became fascinated with Kabbala. It was at this stage that he realised he had a "deep, non-sectarian, religious nature" and a growing interest in belief systems and 'oddities'. "I didn't know, then, that they were called forteana."

To resolve "a great emptiness", he tried to enlist, but was rejected. He joined the Brisbane temple of the Hare Krishnas, doing 'aid work' and learning a bit of Sanskrit and Hindi. There he met and married one of the disciples, a young English girl, Sally Gwynn (1947-1996), daughter of Edward Harold Gwynn, a former British Deputy Undersecretary of State, who shared his disillusionment with the cult's 'spirituality'. Within a year they had a son.

Upon learning she had married an Australian, Sally's upper class family commanded her to return to England. Richard had to stay and work until he could buy his own ticket to the UK. This spurred him to try writing and his first sales were articles on "Hebrew gods, Aboriginal ghosts and *Kadditchi* (Aboriginal shamans)". Unable to settle in the UK, Richard and his small family travelled, doing aid work where they could, in Gran Canaria, Mali, and by 1976, back in Sydney. There, his right lung collapsed, necessitating a stay in hospital. They moved to Lightning Ridge and attempted to work a small opal mine, before Sally took up with an English back-packer. She moved with him to a commune in Nimbin, NSW, and, when the affair ended, returned to the UK with their children.

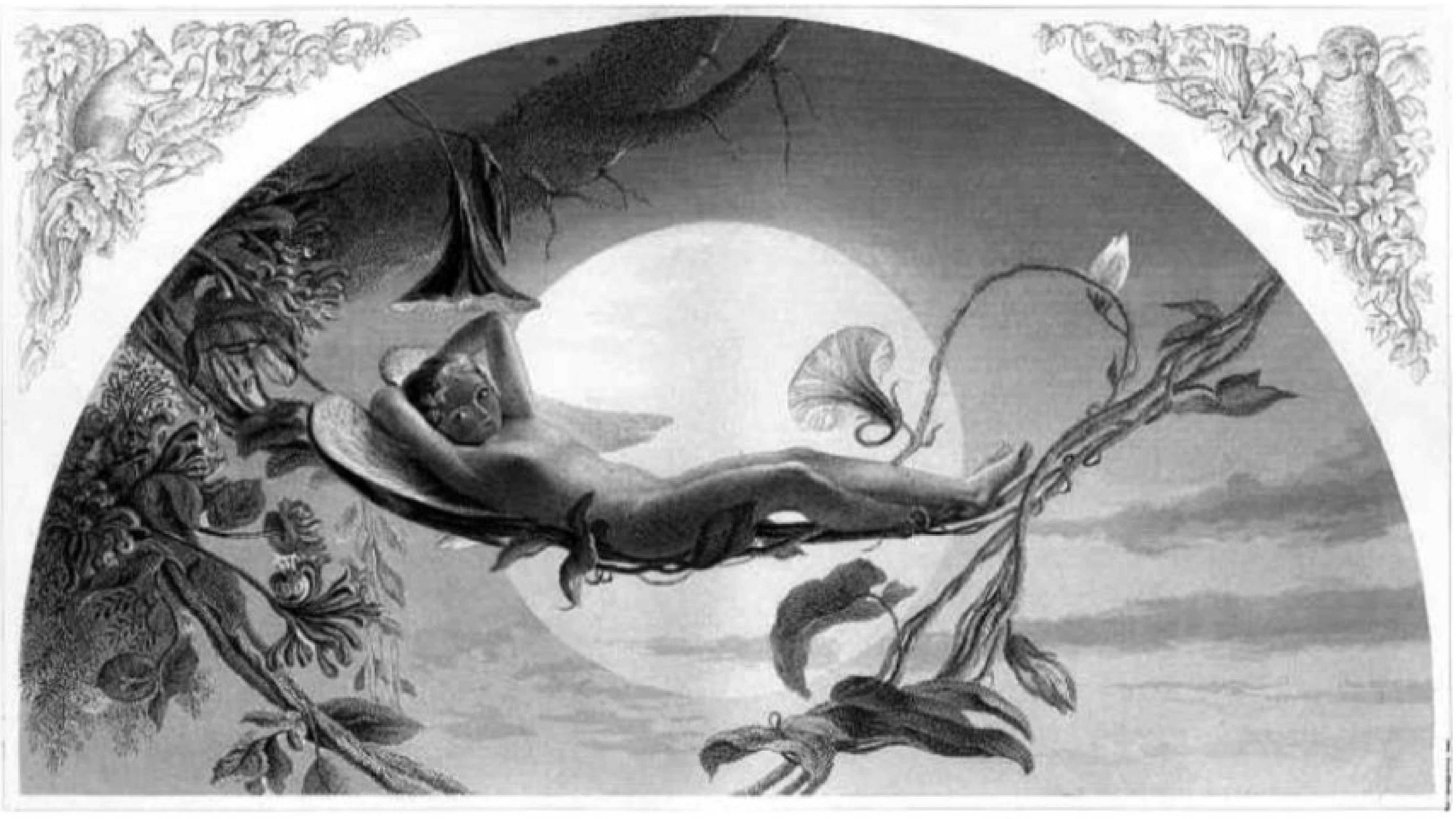
Richard again stayed on in Sydney, throwing himself into working as a councillor at the Wayside Chapel Crisis Centre at Potts Point, while also studying psychology and anthropology at Sydney University. This was also the period in which his life took a complex and dangerous detour – one with far-reaching consequences.

On 13 February 1978, a bomb exploded outside the Sydney Hilton Hotel, which was hosting a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, killing three and injuring 11. Richard was recruited by Special Branch (SB) and the Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO, the Australian equivalent of MI5) to infiltrate the Ananda Marga cult, then under suspicion for the bombing. Richard's undercover action resulted in the entrapment and, in July 1979, conviction of three 'Margis' (Ross Dunn, Paul Alister and Tim Anderson).

Richard desperately needed a break from the stress of all this and, when Sally sought a reconciliation, he went back to her in England. One of Sally's friends owned Bija Press, a small printing business that was in debt; Richard visited them with a view to helping out and ended up buying the company. By coincidence, I had just been referred to Bija to get a quotation for *FT28*. Richard liked what he saw so much he went out of his way to help the Gang of Fort improve production quality in subsequent issues. In 1984, Richard and Sally relocated to Bideford in Devon.

Over the years there have been a several high-level inquiries into successive arrest and trials of different groups of Ananda Marga members who were later released, pardoned and even compensated when their convictions were judged 'unsafe'. In 1985, Richard returned to Sydney to give evidence to the Wood Royal Commission into corruption and misconduct in the NSW police force;

continued on page 26



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG LAUNCHES A NEW FAIRY CENSUS WITH AN APPEAL FOR FT READERS' SIGHTINGS

A NEW FAIRY CENSUS

The 100th anniversary of the Great War has rather overshadowed other lesser anniversaries. But fairy-lovers and those with a fascination for folklore might like to know that we are coming up to the 60th anniversary of Marjorie Johnson and Alasdair Alpin MacGregor's fairy census, detailed elsewhere in this issue (pp30-37). Their appeals for records of fairy sightings 60 years ago brought in scores of letters from fairy witnesses around the UK and, indeed, from much further afield, letters which form the backbone of Marjorie Johnson's *Seeing Fairies* (see pp38-45).

THE NEW FAIRY CENSUS IS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO HAS HAD OR WHO CAN REPORT AT SECONDHAND A FAIRY EXPERIENCE

I have recently, with the help of colleagues with backgrounds in folklore, psychology and forteana, put together a questionnaire for a new fairy census – www.fairyist.com/survey – which finally went online last week and which will stay online until 31 Dec 2016. The census will differ from the 1955-1956 survey in three important respects.

First, Marjorie Johnson and MacGregor wrote to newspapers and asked for letters. The 2015-16 census will be based on an Internet survey, though I will gladly send a questionnaire to anyone who does not have access or who does not feel comfortable working online.

Second, Marjorie Johnson had many qualities, but she was not particularly systematic in taking down information about the wheres and whens of experiences: as someone who wanted to demonstrate fairy existence she focused on the event. The new fairy census will try and put experiences in their proper settings.

Third, it took just under 60 years (!) to finally get a summary of the 1955-56 census into print: I will make sure that no more than a year passes from the end of the census before some form of publication, very probably electronic, is made.

The census is open to anyone who has had or who can report at secondhand a fairy experience (for example, of deceased family members). This experience might have been seen, heard, or even felt. If you have had something that tradition would have labelled as a fairy experience then, by all means, put in a report: it is immaterial whether you believe that the experience was fairy-inspired. Finally, it goes without saying that actual names will not be used and that, if need be, other details can be changed to further protect anonymity.

Please, pass on the survey link to anyone who might be interested by social media, email, the telephone and letters: one of the most understudied but fascinating areas of fortean studies badly needs a rigorous empirical study. There is also a short survey on fairy belief that is open to all, not just witnesses.

NECROLOG

ABOVE LEFT: Richard being led away by police in a vain attempt to keep his cover at the scene of the arrest of two of the 'Yagoona Three' in 1978. **ABOVE RIGHT:** In Sydney. 1985, for the Woods Commission.

the Commission recommended that Dunn, Alister and Anderson receive pardons and compensation for "false arrest". Richard was called back to Sydney again in 1990, when another convicted 'Margi', Evan Pederick, then serving eight years for the Hilton bombing, was now a Crown witness in a re-trial of Anderson; Anderson was again acquitted by the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1991.

Understandably, these accused and their lawyers treated Richard and his testimony harshly, to the extent that news reports, several books and even a film vilified him as a drug addict, a fantasist, a serial perjurer and even a "psychopath". Because of official secrets agreements that he felt bound by, Richard did not defend himself until 2012, when he published an ebook – *Smoke 'n' Mirrors: How the Australian People were screwed* – in which he denied all of the defamation, except where it was used as part of his cover. He also claimed that the SB controlled most of what he did and what he said in court, and that much of it seemed incompetent and put his life in danger. Even Paul Alister, in one of his many defences of the Ananda Marg – *Bombs, Bliss and Baba* (1997) – discusses how Richard and the trials might have been manipulated by Special Branch.

Not only has the motive for bombing itself "never been satisfactorily answered" but, claimed documentary makers Daryl Dellora and Ian Wansbrough in 1994, "evidence points to a significant conspiracy involving state and federal government agencies, security and intelligence services and the police (see www.greenleft.org.au/node/9881). Thirty years after the bombing, crime reporter Mike Head complained: "Despite the collapse of two police frame-ups, the state Liberal and federal Labor governments effectively blocked demands for an official inquiry into the Hilton affair" (see www.wsws.org/en/articles/2008/02/hilton-f13.html).

Before returning to the UK after the Wood Commission in 1985, the Searys made an extended stopover in Sri Lanka to do aid work with *Sarvodaya*, an apolitical aid organisation based on Ghandi's ideas of 'spiritual uplift', run by the saintly Buddhist Dr AT Ariaratne. This was against the backdrop of the vicious war between the government and the Tamil Tigers but, Richard wrote later, "extraordinary things happened that helped me restore some faith in humanity and to not be so angry and embittered."

Once back in the UK, they bought an ancient house called 'The Woolsack', part of a mediæval hostelry in Woolfardisworthy (Woolsery), North Devon. Here, Richard concentrated on study, research and writing, and launched a mail-order sideline to supply *FT* readers with discounted books. He developed an intense interest in marine history and, in 1987, published his own study of "the uses and abuses of the sea", *The Way of the Sea* (1987) and provided the research for Charles Berlitz's *The Dragon's Triangle* (1989). Shortly after, they moved a few miles nearer the coast, to Hartland, where Richard also became, for a short time, curator of the Shipwreck, Maritime and Marine Museum at the old quay in Hartland, which dates back to Saxon times.

By this time, the revelations and stress of the interminable inquiry appearances put an end to his fragile reconciliation with Sally and, in 1991, their marriage finally ended. Richard went home to Australia to stay, full of regret at having to leave his children behind. December saw him once more counselling Sydney's 'street kid' gangs, when he was hit by a car which permanently damaged one leg. The constant work with the equally constant threat of violence wore him down so he formally retired to Bribey Island, north of Brisbane. There, he had met a New Zealand ex-nurse, Jennifer Harold; Sally agreed to a divorce in September 1993, and Richard and Jennifer married a month later.

In 1994, Richard made a formal complaint to the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security – http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/714539 – about the inaction and incompetence of ASIO and its use of agents within terrorist organisations, requesting an inquiry into the way they had used him and then abandoned him without any public support. Thus began the longest and most in-depth investigation into Australia's Security Service ever. A heavily censored version of the final report – called 'The Seary Complaint against ASIO' was tabled in Federal Parliament four years later. An approved version appears in Richard's 2012 ebook, which seems to absolve state officials of any blame.

Having put the secret work behind him by 1995, Richard went back to university, studying "Theology with Majors in Biblical/Classical Hebrew and Semitic Languages" and was awarded a First (High Distinction) in biblical Hebrew. His first project was to make a new translation of the Copper Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls collection. "Many scholars had thought it was indecipherable and gibberish", he told me, "but I believe it is a treasure map from the first Roman-Jewish War [AD 66-73]". See his article, "Scroll with it" [**FT93:28-33**]. He was also working on retranslating *Genesis,* to show that it was far more than just Semitic mythology but a mystical text.

For most of his adult life Richard had been a semi-Observant Jew and undertook rabbinical training wherever he could. It gave him great pleasure, therefore, in his last years, to be accepted as a surrogate rabbi to a mixed community of Jews and Christians, teaching biblical Hebrew, Scripture studies, and forms of Jewish mysticism. His last political activity was as the elected representative for former State Wards, to give evidence to the 1999 Forde Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, and wrote an article on it (**FT142:30-33**). He later told me: "The fact the State's dirty little secrets were published in a 'foreign' journal caused *FT* to be mentioned in Parliamentary questions and greatly assisted victims to receive compensation." The last paid position Richard and Jennifer had was as carers for tribal Aboriginal children in the far north of Queensland, who were removed from remote communities because of violence and abuse.

His final trip outside Australia was in July 2009, firstly to England to reconcile with his children and grandchildren, then to Israel with Jennifer and the realisation of their deepest wish, to pray at the Kotel, the great western wall of Herod's temple in Jerusalem.

Richard Joachim John Seary (aka Richard J Gwynn, Richard J Gwynn-Seary, Richard Joachim, Richard JJ ben Serai, Richard-Rafael Joachim Ben Serai), Australian aid worker, Hebrew scholar, FT printer and undercover agent, born Sydney, New South Wales, 28 Jan 1951; died Cairns North, Queensland, 2 Oct 2014, aged 63.

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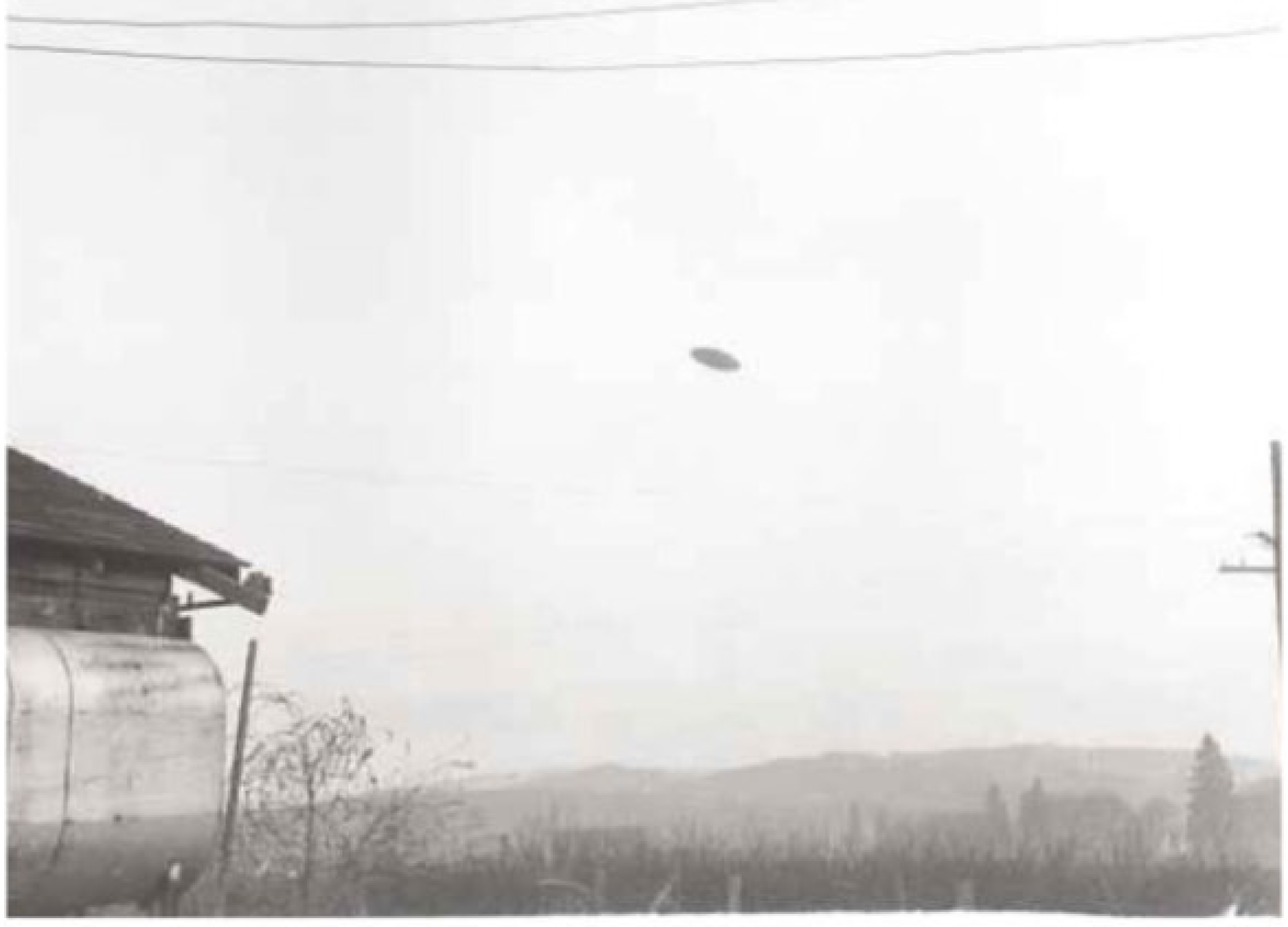
FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY



THE BEST... BUSTED?

Many ufologists have cherished lists of 'best evidence' cases they believe supports what Eddie Bullard calls "an anomalous identity" for some puzzling sightings. But over the past decade we have watched as a number of these 'best evidence' stories – such as Cash Landrum (**FT310:26**) and Exeter (**FT288:28**) – have crumbled as a result of cold case investigations. The evidence for many UFO stories rests entirely upon witness testimony, but the photographs taken by farmer Paul Trent at McMinnville, Oregon, in 1950 were different. Kevin Randle says there are only two possible conclusions that can be drawn: "They either show a craft from another world, or they are a hoax – I do not see a third possibility." Trent's photos survived a mauling from the Condon team in 1968 and photographic experts like Bruce Maccabee, who spent years studying the case, said the Trents were too unimaginative to perpetrate such a successful hoax. But now the weight of evidence suggests the photos really *are* a hoax. In 2004, the late Joel Carpenter said he believed the 'flying saucer' in Trent's photos was a car wing mirror, possibly taken from a 1911 Ford Model T. But no one could show how Trent managed to suspend it below the pair of wires visible in the pictures without leaving a trace. Last year, a group of French sceptics, IPACO, used advanced techniques to re-examine the photos and, although they could not identify the suspension thread, they concluded the object was a model (see **FT301:26**). The challenge was taken up by author Jay J Walter, who has used advanced photo-enhancement software to identify the thread above the 'object' in both photos. Carpenter did not live to see his hunch vindicated but Walter writes: "I think Trent walked to the garage one evening, tied a string to an old motor shroud... tossed the shroud over a wire and tied the other end of the string to an anchor near the ground." As we have always said, the simplest explanation is often the best one. For more details see Bob Sheaffer's special report on the McMinnville photos: http://tinyurl.com/ltr72v5

DRONING ON... AND ON

As we revealed last year (**FT308:24**), remote-controlled drones used by the police and security services have been implicated in many UFO sightings since at least 1982. Advanced drones are now routinely deployed by a range of authorities and media organisations to monitor street protests and sporting events across the world. A new generation of advanced UAVs is capable of amazing manoeuvres and are rapidly replacing Sky Lanterns as a source for UFOs captured on film. During protests in São Paulo, Brazil, last year, thousands of people saw a bright UFO darting across the sky that turned out to be a drone with a camera attached sent up by a local news station. A BBC viewer in Scotland spotted another on footage showing thousands of people at a pro-democracy protest in Hong Kong in September this year. The object appears on the left of the screen and descends in front of a building before moving towards a skyscraper where it stops and hovers. Then, it suddenly launches vertically up in the air. Visual analysis experts agreed that a drone was the best explanation. Ben Hansen told *The Huffington Post* that "the lighting set-up is a bit strange, but it could look like one solid light because of the distance." *Huffington Post*, 1 October: http://tinyurl.com/mcuqz95

ARTS OF HOAX

There was a media buzz in mid-September when a photograph of an alleged UFO was published in the *Portsmouth News*. A disc was pictured, "hovering" over a residential area on 16 September. Johnny Blackwell said: "It was a grey, disc-like shape, which I know sounds like a stereotypical UFO, but that's what it looked like." There were other witnesses too. Lewis Rogers initially thought it was "an aeroplane, but it was just moving too quickly." Lewis was lucky, because he believed in UFOs and often looked "up at the sky in the evening wondering if there is anything or anyone else out there." Had his dreams been answered? The Met Office was convinced it wasn't meteorological in origin, and a lecturer on cosmology from the University of Portsmouth opined that it wasn't astronomical in either. So, a genuine UFO caught on film, or something else?

Hoaxes are a central pillar of the UFO phenomenon, but they are rarely admitted or discovered, remaining unexplained in the UFO mythos and acting as support for other sightings. The hoaxers of the Portsmouth disc, however, came clean almost immediately; the hoax was perpetrated to promote a science fiction festival! Organiser Joshua Hibberd said: "We got eight or 10 people from around Portsmouth to take a picture at the same time on the same evening." The 'UFO' was added in Photoshop, and a froth of excitement artificially generated on social media. One hoaxer perceptively summed the prank up thus: "It's amazing how people's imaginations have been taken by this. We really didn't expect it to go as big as it has. We've found websites with people talking about it in Canada, India, Singapore, all over." In these days of digital manipulation we might never be able to trust a UFO photograph again – but we can always trust the response to one! www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/creators-of-ufo-hoax-come-forward-1-6315331

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES EXPLORES ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE 'OZ FACTOR'

ENCHANTED REALITY

When I was living in Wallasey some years ago I had a rather curious experience. Out shopping before my other half returned from work, I remembered that our new GP had asked me to drop off details of my previous doctor from before we had bought our new Wirral home. I had not been to see this particular doctor in years and was completely blank as to his surname. Back then, there was no Internet to look him up – but I had something eerily better at my disposal.

All of a sudden a strange feeling came over me – shifting my state of consciousness. Now in a daze, but with a certainty that was overwhelming, I set off on automatic pilot, unaware where I was going. Something inside of me seemingly knew, though, and was guiding me there.

Strolling across traffic-filled streets, I paid little heed to my safety and found myself inside the local library, a place I had no intention of visiting. After ambling over to the desk I stood there without any clue what to expect. Moments later a stranger arrived, put a book on the counter to check it with the librarian; I noticed the unfamiliar and odd name of the author was almost exactly the same as that of my old doctor. Instantly, I recalled my old GP's real identity and, with a broad smile over what had just happened, continued my journey, now able to fulfil my obligation to my new practitioner.

It's easy to argue that this was just coincidence, but it felt like more than that. Indeed, it was as if some part of my inner consciousness knew how to solve my problem and guided me there. But how such a thing can be possible, given our normal perception of space and time, is another matter.

This altered state of consciousness, that I call the 'Oz Factor', was something I recognised within the UFO phenomenon. It occurs where the witness finds the outside world defocusing and time, space and the normal flow of events vanishing from perception. I suspect it is the result of an inward focus as you go into deeper levels of yourself and become aware of things like subconscious streams of thought, intuition and imagery tickling the edge of your senses.

This is probably an automatic process where the brain kicks you into Oz Factor mode because it sees that you need to be on that plane of thinking in order for immediate, perhaps urgent, needs to be fulfilled. As a result it kicks other more routine functions (such as external perceptions) into the background and onto autonomic control without need for your direct attention. This may be why we tend to enter this state more readily when in a form of daydream or reverie – and in an otherwise lowered state of environmental stimulation – such as in a bedroom or driving on a quiet country road late at night. Note how UFO close encounters and alien contacts follow these rules: abductions often happen to people in their bedrooms at night, not in crowded supermarkets; close encounters occur on quiet country roads in the early hours and almost never on busy motorways where concentration is required. This phenomenon is not something I discovered. The same thing has been described in many different ways down through the ages. It is the basis of various religious experiences and crops up in centuries of claimed meetings with fairies, where witnesses talk of entering an enchanted realm during the sighting**.** The modern equivalent is the alien contact, which occurs in a hinterland between not-quite-imagination and not-quite-the-real-world.

The inspiration to tie these thoughts together in this column came from a number of reports made to me following my mention of the Oz Factor in the national press. They illustrate the diversity of how this experience taps into an extraordinary potential inside of us.

John offered a fascinating tale of his life at sea during the 1940s and 1950s. Whilst an engineer on long cargo runs between Australia and South Africa in 1954, he recalled the long quiet periods he would spend on deck with little to stimulate him. One day, he took to sketching on a single big sheet of paper, something he had no history of doing, and created a very detailed drawing of a scene that he did not recognise. It was a building with a most unusual shape and fields sloping down toward a railway line. He had never seen this place, but after he returned from the sea he took a job constructing a unique grain silo way out in the country. That day, he sat alone atop this monster building and suddenly realised that he was staring at the very scene that he had 'visualised' on that long, quiet sea journey when in an idling state of consciousness. Somehow, entering enchanted reality had allowed him to access something outside his own time and space.

Meanwhile, Walter told me of an experience on a hot, still, summer's day in 1936 when camping in the country beside the Thames. He suddenly realised that his pockets were empty and he had lost all his money, probably whilst climbing a tree. Despite frantic searches of the fields he could not find it, and set off to walk home. Suddenly, a frog hopped across his view and he leapt instinctively, trying to catch it, shouting without thinking: "Catch the frog, find the money." He failed to catch the frog, but as he fell on the ground his hands wrapped around his lost money – hidden in the grass as a pile of a dozen coins.

Curious pre-UFO age stories – but if you need convincing how they connect with our mystery, this case should help. The witness was a high-powered company director who in the summer of 1970 was fishing on mid-stream islands in the Thames near Reading.

He and a friend awoke at 5am to witness a large object climb from the bank to hover about 100ft (30m) overhead. In the clear blue dawn sky it was plainly visible as a large flat-bottomed disc, with a dome on top and a series of rapidly rotating holes or lights on the base. They stared in amazement as it disappeared by fading into a crescent shape, then regaining full structure and vanishing into nothingness right above their heads.

This is a classic close encounter, which even at this hour, so close to a large town, should have been seen by many, but appeared only to put on a show for two people close together. The key to the fishermen's entry into enchanted reality appears to have been the Oz Factor, which was described clearly to me.

As the encounter began they had a strange sense of calmness that welled up within them. They then felt as if they were being taken from the world around them, which became subdued and muted. Only they and the UFO above them existed within this new reality into which they had entered. Afterwards, they both felt as if the episode had been unique and directed solely at them.

I think these diverse reports and the link provided by the Oz Factor demonstrate the need to approach the UFO mystery with a much broader sweep than is often applied. It is not just a simple choice between alien visitors and misperceptions: at heart, it touches on quite profound questions about consciousness, perception and the nature of time and space. But to get to this destination you have to appreciate that there is much more to ufology than UFOs.

THE FAIRY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY

The Fairy Investigation Society, dedicated to tracking down modern accounts of the Little People, must rank as one of the strangest British organisations ever to come into being. **SIMON YOUNG** tells the story of this curious enterprise through five key episodes – from a Fairy Census to a tabloid scandal – in its eccentric and largely forgotten history.

1. SLEIGH AND CRAUFURD MEET (1927)

It was the kind of moment over which flies queue up for wall space. Two of the most eccentric men in Britain in one room – and they had come to talk about fairies.

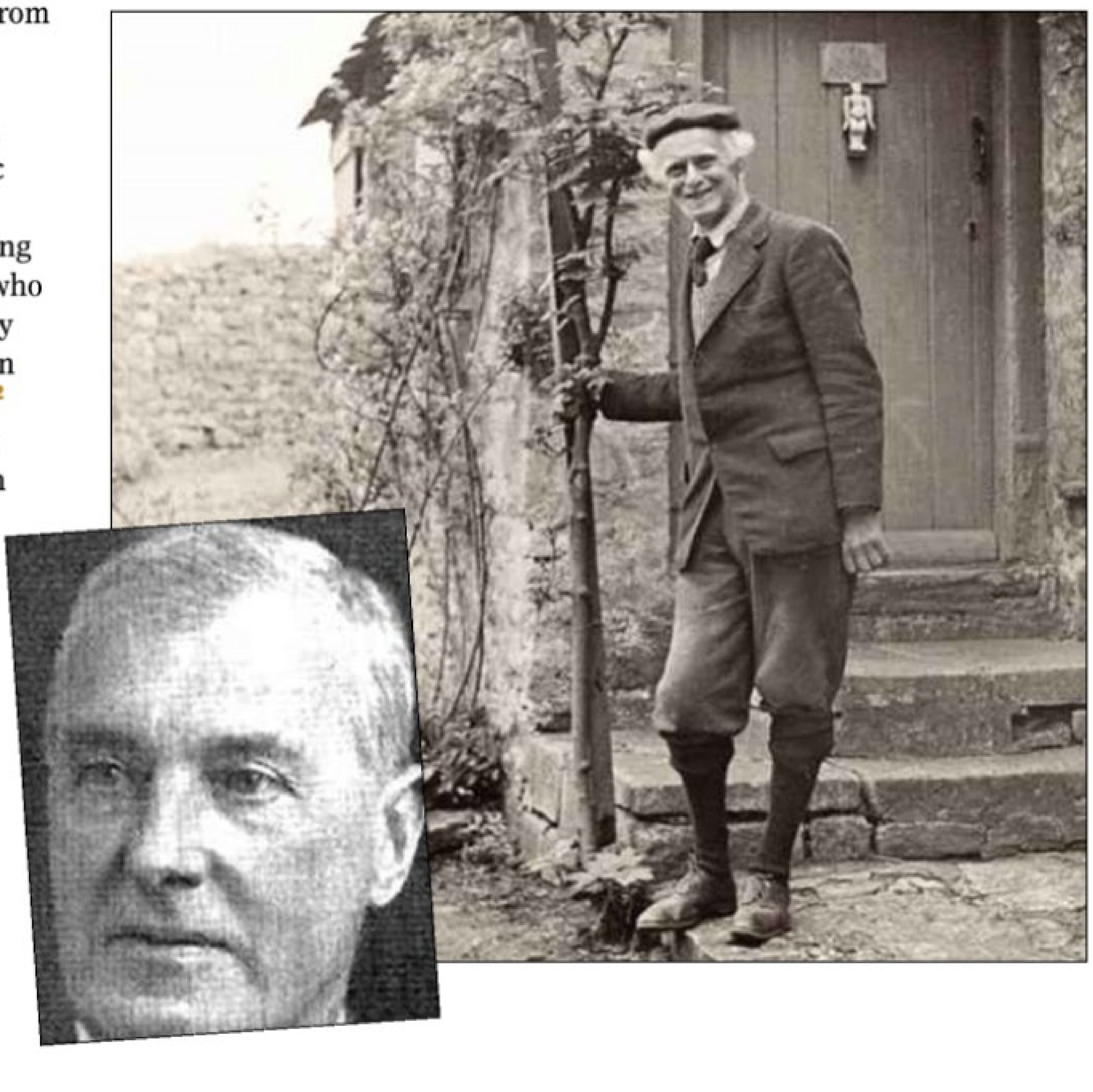
TWO OF THE MOST ECCENTRIC MEN IN BRITAIN CAME TO TALK ABOUT FAIRIES

On the one hand, there was Quentin A Craufurd, a retired British naval officer of aristocratic lineage. Craufurd had not only been a talented seaman during his years in the Royal Navy, but also, before his retirement, a talented scientist. He had carried out, in fact, in 1907, the first wireless broadcast in Britain from *HMS Andromeda*. [1]

But Craufurd had long had an interest in the paranormal. He was convinced that psychic communication with animals was possible, particularly during dreams; his advice to anyone who had found a fledgling or a stray cat would have been to sleep in the same room as the animal. [2] Then, he began to experiment with spiritualism. Of course, in the 1920s, this was practically *de rigueur* among the metropolitan middle classes. But Craufurd did things, as always, his own way. He took messages from the dead with an 'ether box' – i.e. a radio – and soon became known in spiritualist circles as 'the wireless man'. [3]

The second individual was Bernard Sleigh. Sleigh was an artist, based for much of his career in Birmingham. In 1897, he had had a brain operation and had subsequently experienced peculiar visions: in later years he described himself as "psychic". [4] Sleigh specialised in wood engraving – his surviving pieces are often phenomenally beautiful – and published several works centred on illustrations of elfish fantasy: many of these works are available in the British Library. Most notable was *The Gates of Horn*, which had been published in London in 1926, the year before the meeting. It was, as it happens, *The Gates of Horn* that had brought Sleigh and Craufurd together.

The subtitle of *The Gates of Horn* was "Sundry Records from the Proceedings of the Society for the Investigation of Faery Fact & Fallacy". Sleigh had created a brilliant frame for modern fairy stories, a society dedicated to the investigation of fairies with various singular members and a hinterland of powerful fairies beyond: sell an idea like this today to HBO and you'd make a mint. Nor were the stories the twee, moralising gunge of late Victorian children's



LEFT: Founding fathers of the FIS: Quentin A Crauford (inset) and a splendidly attired Bernard Sleigh.

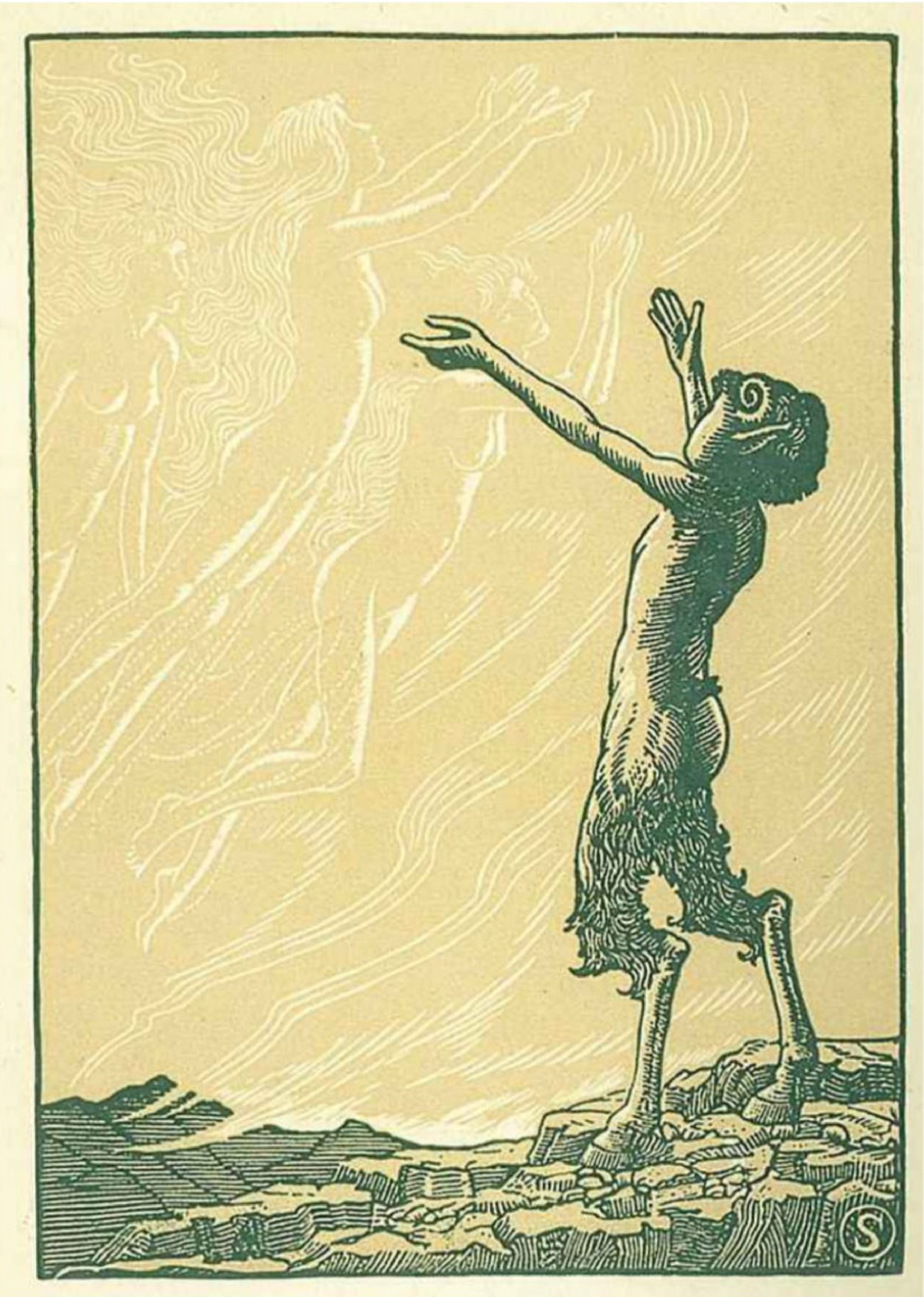
The FAËRY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY
FAERY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY
CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP
This is to certify that
has been accepted as Member
ty for Investigating
of fairy existences
Members of

fiction: "little Billy Bee-Yellow slipped on his green and red hat and flew zig-zaggedly to the door..." They described the dangerous and often tragic encounters between mortals and the fey. They involved death and they are overtly sexualised to a degree that is quite jarring for someone expecting Wee Willy Winky with gauze wings.

Craufurd had, in any case, been given *The Gates* by a friend and had decided to act: he made an appointment with Bernard Sleigh. We do not know where the meeting took place, but we do know the result. Craufurd and Sleigh agreed to create a real-life Faery Investigation Society (the spelling would change with the years). The Society took some time to really come to life. However, by 1929, when the energetic Claire Cantlon, a psychic with a criminal record, took over as secretary, the London Lodge printed its first newsletter: there were also membership certificates and FIS letter-heads. [5] The Society had some 50 members and was able, in 1929, to host five lectures with such speakers as EL Gardner (who probably dragged out the Cottingley photos for the nth time), fairy mystic and artist, Tom Charman (with his 25 'automatic' fairy pictures) and a certain Madame Zanoni. [6] The meetings took place at Five Smith Square, though occasionally the group met at the Green Salon on Chandos Street and we know the names of about 10 of the 50 members. There were also certain anonymous establishment figures: "We heard accounts from members who wished to hide their identity since they held high official positions." [7]

2. MUCKING ABOUT WITH MARSH FAIRIES (1927-1932)

Sleigh may have been a founding member, but nothing is subsequently heard of him in connection with the FIS: he eventually retired to Gloucestershire, where he lived an idyllic rural existence. Craufurd, however, remained at the heart of the FIS until his death in 1957. His work was, in part, organisational. He wrote, for example, the editorial to the first FIS newsletter. He seems also to have been an ambassador for the organisation, making contact with non-members: including apparently Arthur Conan Doyle, who also corresponded with Claire Cantlon about fairy sightings.[8] But he was true, too, to his scientific roots. He continued to experiment and, Craufurd being Craufurd, he experimented with the radio. In 1927, in fact, he was messing around with some form of wireless device when he heard a harmony: "I began with an electrical apparatus of my own design and a nearly worn-out torch-battery, and one day I heard fairy music, the sound of harps and bells." [9]



ABOVE: Bernard Sleigh's beautiful frontispiece illustration for the book *The Gates of Horn*, published in 1926.

Craufurd then proceeded to ask questions and entered into a dialogue with these fairies (for so he believed them to be), as spiritualists in the 1920s typically did with the dead. The voices informed Craufurd that the only way to talk to the fairies was to "tune in".

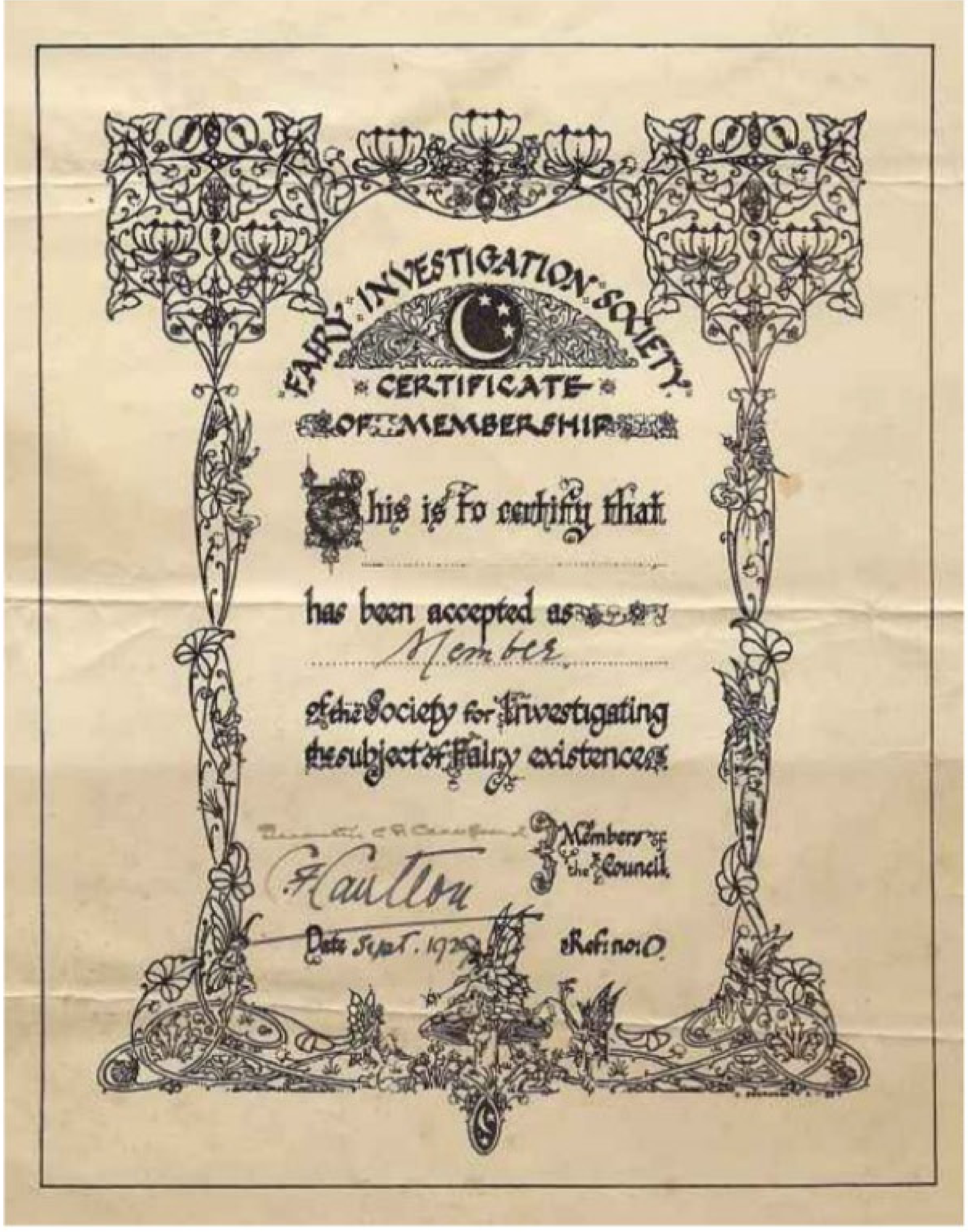
There is actually a good chance that this episode took place before Craufurd's meeting with Sleigh. Craufurd claimed in his later writing that these bizarre communications convinced him of the existence of fairy life. Perhaps he read *The Gates of Horn* only after the experience. Certainly, when he met Sleigh he seems to have been a believer, or enough of a believer to have wanted to found an organisation dedicated to fairy studies.

The question is of only relative importance, because Craufurd and the marsh fairies – he reported that there were nine – had a five-year relationship. The marshies would make their presence known, and Craufurd, who was so talkative that a spirit had once refused him access to a seance, would ask questions. [10] Many people, he reported later, came to his rooms to test the truth of his communications, presumably members of the FIS among them. What is now unknown is the way in which Craufurd communicated with these marsh fairies. Was it with the apparatus mentioned above (whatever that apparatus was)? Or was it by a more conventional spiritualist trick like automatic writing? We know that Craufurd used automatic writing with fairies on other occasions. [11] He gives a clue in his brief account when he recalls how: "[The marsh fairies] also gave evidence of their knowledge. They would *write for us* and use strange words of ancient Saxon for which we had to find the meaning" (my italics).[12]

In any case, the experiments, by whatever means, continued. The fairies were challenged to pass through solid walls and doors, to make flowers dance in time to music and they even gave information about buried archæological objects, "in some cases confirmed where it was practicable." [13] Craufurd evidently enjoyed himself. He later recalled the late 1920s as "the halcyon days" of the FIS. [14]

3. THE GREAT FAIRY CENSUS (1955-1956)

The FIS withered and died some years before World War II: "We had not all the same motives and the same language, and the Society disintegrated like the walls of the Tower of Babel," Craufurd wrote years later. [15]



FAIRY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP

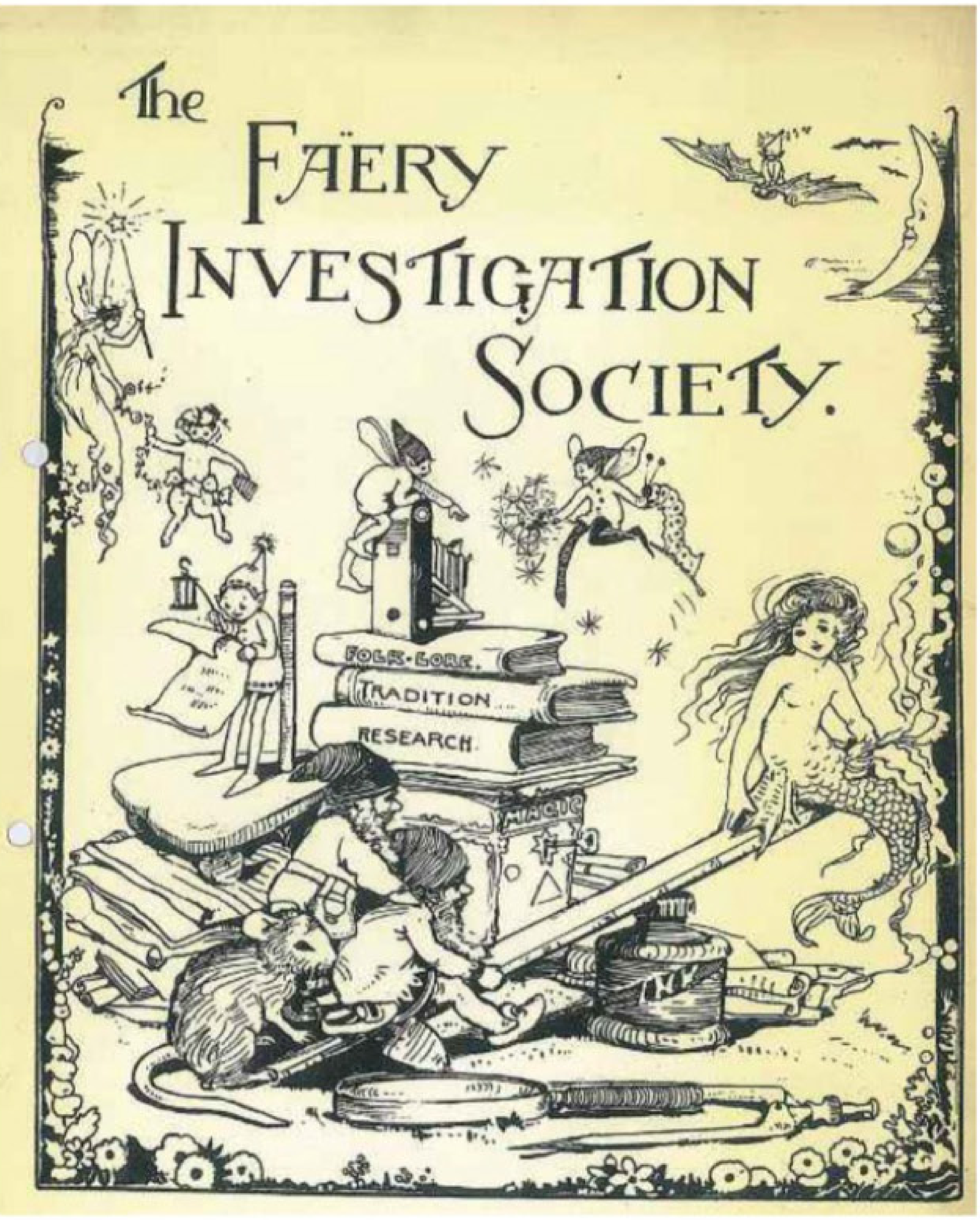
This is to certify that

has been accepted as Member

of the Society for Investigating the subject of Fairy existences

Members of the Council

Date Sept. 192 Ref no. O



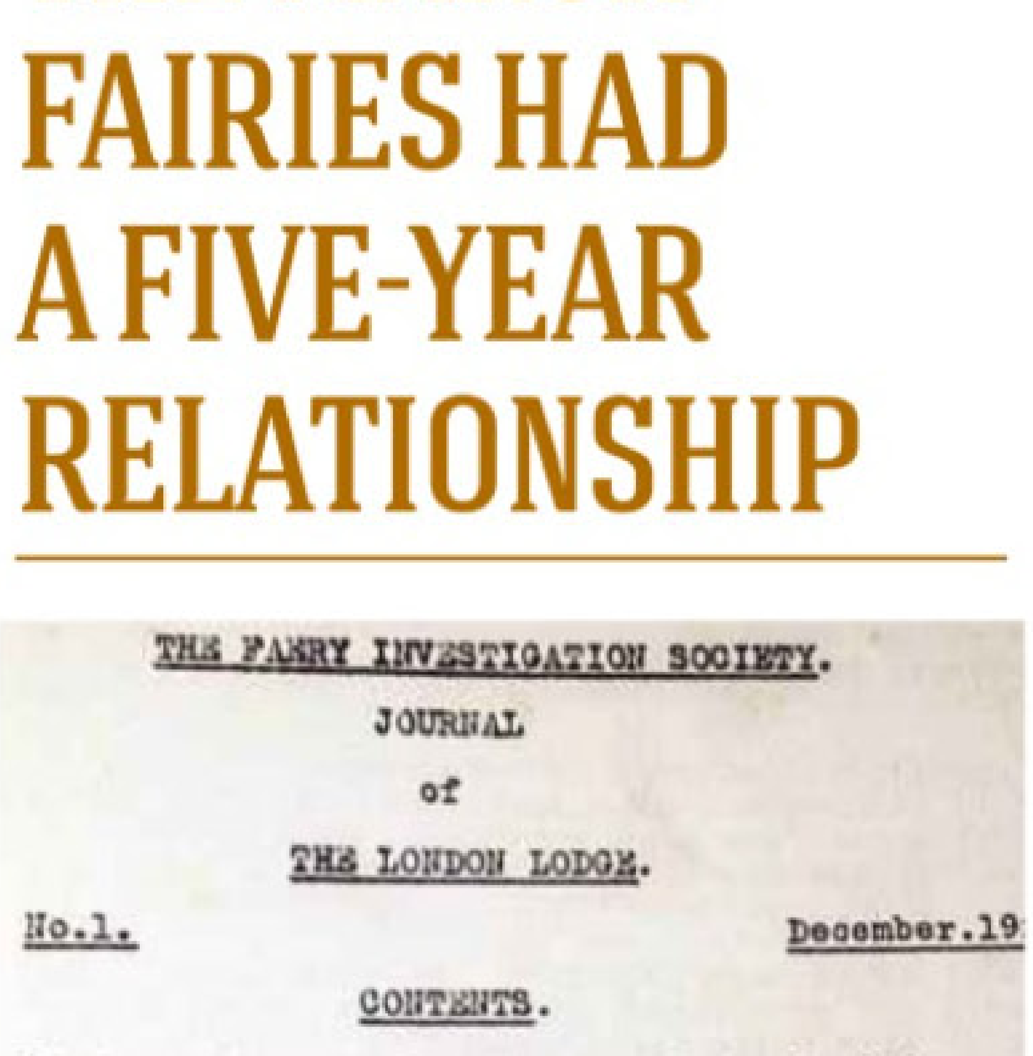
ABOVE: A membership certificate for the Fairy Investigation Society and the cover of the first issue of the Society's Journal. **BELOW:** A table of contents for the first issue.

Many of the records, too, were "scattered" in the war by "enemy action", presumably the London blitz or German bombing elsewhere: these records apparently contained fairy accounts from all over the country, a major and now lost folklore source.[16] However, by 1947, Craufurd, aged 72, started up a Fairy Investigation Society again:[17] one that would include about 100 men and women, including such luminaries as Walt Disney, Ithell Colquhoun, Hugh Dowding, Walter Starkie and June Kynaston, author of *Nude Dancing for Health*.[18]

In 1950, Craufurd made a certain Marjorie T Johnson secretary of the Society and she ran the FIS for much of the next 15 years. Pre-war members like Sleigh and Craufurd came from the Edwardian middle classes and most were connected with London. However, Marjorie Johnson had a different profile. She was born and was to spend all her life in the English Midlands. She came from a professional background in Nottingham and worked as a secretary in a solicitor's office. She had, though, many virtues that her more privileged predecessors had lacked, and she transformed the organisation. First, and this is apparently what caught Craufurd's eye, she had been collecting accounts of fairy sightings independently for many years: she had herself seen fairies since infancy.[19] And, second, while sensitive and introverted, she had the energy to write the dozens of letters required for the running of the Society. She also had the energy to organise the Fairy Census of 1955-1956...

In 1955 a letter appeared in *Folklore* from Scottish folklorist Alasdair Alpin MacGregor.

CRAUFORD AND THE MARSH FAIRIES HAD A FIVE-YEAR RELATIONSHIP



THE FAIRY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY.

JOURNAL

of

THE LONDON LODGE.

No.1. December.19

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An account of Anne Jeffries.
E.Frey.

Fairies in Cornwall.
C.A.Dawson Scott.

The Philosophy of Faery.
Capt.Q.C.A.Craufurd.R.N.

Some Experiences. Gloria Guelph.

Fairies.
Mrs Hayter.

Extract from the "Daily Express".

Editorial Notes.

- o - o - o - o - o - o - o - o - o - o - o - o

It is the first clue we have that the Fairy Census was underway.

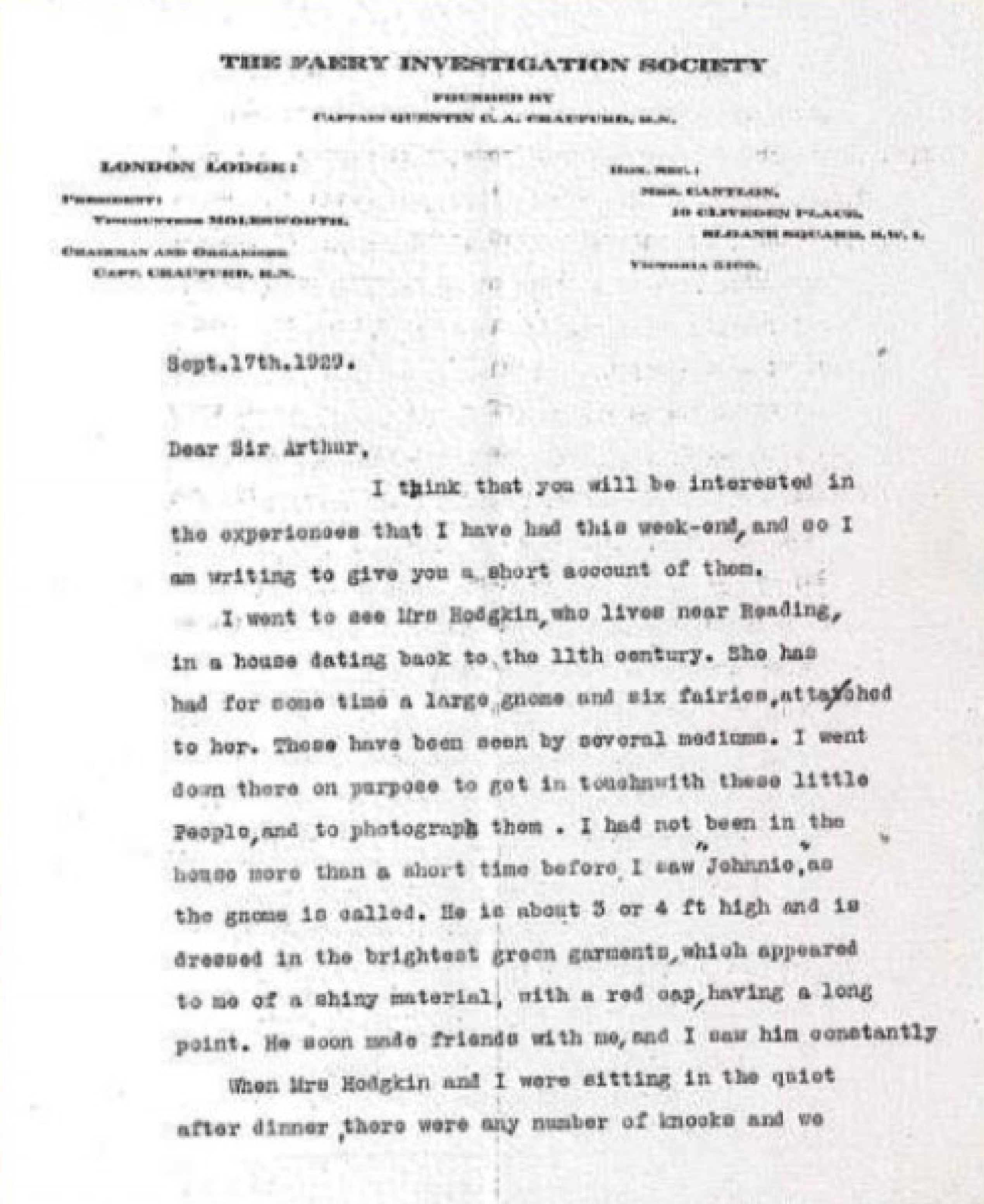
> *"Sir, I am collaborating with Marjorie Thelma Johnson in a serious work dealing with contemporaneous accounts of Fairy Vision. A great mass of acceptable material is already in hand; but it would be a pity to go to press without seeking supplementary bona fide evidence known to exist. If any reader would care to submit an authentic account of his or her having seen, or been aware of the presence of, a fairy or fairies, we would certainly give it sympathetic consideration."*[20]

Marjorie Johnson greatly admired MacGregor, a fellow FIS member. In fact, one of the first articles she collected on fairy sightings had been published by the Scottish author before the war. At some point in the mid-1950s they had evidently decided to work together in collecting other fairy accounts for a book that Marjorie was planning. Marjorie reports in one letter visiting MacGregor at his Chelsea home on several occasions: MacGregor was, meanwhile, overjoyed with the project, dedicating his *Ghost Book* (1955) to Marjorie: "Oh Marjorie! This book, at last, is ready for the printer, thanks largely to you, and to the Little Folk, whose aid on its behoof you were able to invoke." Strong stuff for a mainstream folklorist.

Marjorie Johnson's decision to enlist MacGregor was an intelligent one. MacGregor was not only a good writer, but also a canny self-publicist, as the letter to *Folklore* hints (and he wrote similar letters to many different publications in 1955). Any

Early Sources

Few pre-war documents from the FIS survive. Here are a small selection of these rare accounts.



THE FAERY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY
FOUNDED BY
CAPTAIN QUENTIN C. A. CRAUFURD, R.N.

LONDON LODGE:
PRESIDENT:
VISCOUNTESS MOLESWORTH.
CHAIRMAN AND ORGANISER
CAPT. CRAUFURD, R.N.

HON. SEC.:
MRS. CANTLON,
10 CLIVEDEN PLACE,
SLOANE SQUARE, S.W. 1.
VICTORIA 5106.

Sept.17th.1929.

Dear Sir Arthur,

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LEFT: Letter from Claire Cantlon to Arthur Conan Doyle, note the FIS letterhead.

I. Letter to Arthur Conan Doyle (pictured below) from CF Cantlon, Secretary of the Faery Investigation Society, printed courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center.

Sept. 17th. 1929

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When Mrs Hodgkin and I were sitting in the quiet after dinner, there were any number of knocks and we were told these were done by the gnome. On Sunday evening after tea she asked me to give her a trance sitting. We went to her bed-room, and I had only just gone under control when there was a report like a gun shot. She said that it was so loud that she jumped, and White Chief who was controlling me, said it was the gnome doing it for fun. Almost immediately I came to myself with the most dreadful jerk, and my heart thumping at the most appalling crash quite close to me, and pouring water. Frankly I was terrified, and if Mrs Hodgkin had not had the presence of mind to hold my hands very tight I should have collapsed.

When I looked round to see what had happened I saw that a large and heavy crystal bowl, which had been standing on a small table near us, full of flowers, was rent in half and the water was pouring onto the floor.

In this bowl was one of those heavy glass stands for flowers, with holes in them. This was cracked in dozens of places. The curious part of the bowl was that it had not fallen off the table. It was simply split in two, but splinters and fragments were scattered all over the room, as far as seven or eight yards. The whole was simply disintegrated.

My first feeling was of fear that some evil force was present and I asked for a Ouija board which Mrs Hodgkin has. She took the pointer and her Guide controlled at once and assured me that it was the gnome who had done it, from pure mischief and not realising what he was doing. He had nothing in his hand when he did it. It was done for 'fun'.

The whole phenomenon was so very remarkable that we collected all the pieces, and I have brought them home, together with a written and signed statement by Mrs Hodgkin, and I intend to exhibit the pieces at the next meeting of the Society.

Mrs Hodgkin had arranged the flowers in the bowl that morning, and both the bowl and the stand were quite sound and were not cracked. The bowl is of *very* heavy cut glass, nearly half an inch thick.

I was told yesterday by 'Chang', Mr Sharplin's Control, that the Little People have a great mastery over a force peculiar to themselves.

'Johnnie' was very frightened over what he had been done [sic], and appeared just like a dog with his tail between his legs. He was very funny.

The crash of the splintering glass sounded to me like an explosion. I did not hear the first report as I was then in a deep trance.

Even after the crash there were many more knocks all over the room, some the loudest that I have ever heard with any physical medium.

I took a lot of snap-shots and I have been told that I have got some good results. They are at present at Kodak being developed and printed.

CF Cantlon, Hon. Secretary Faery Investigation Society

II. Fairies, an account by Mrs Hayter, dated 16 May 1927

In August of last year, I was sitting alone in my garden. The day was a beautiful one, with the sun shining, and the air quite calm, the time of day would be about 5 or 6 o' clock in the evening. The flowers were very beautiful with all the riches of colour that generally occurs on an autumn evening. Some of the flowers were tall and others of different heights downwards… I had been reading, and on taking my eyes from my book and looking round me, I saw little people running and skipping about in and out amongst the flowers. Some of the little people were about 9 or 10 inches [23-25cm] in height, while others were shorter. There seemed to me to be about a dozen of them, and they were dressed beautifully and perfectly, and each one was garbed in different attire to the other; but all in dainty garments which seemed to suit them perfectly. They were well proportioned and carried a distinction in sex, in that some wore dresses while others wore breeches. The most vivid impression left on my mind as to their physique is that, although they were so active and agile in their movements, and so beautifully proportioned, their actions were so dainty and delicate; that they gave me the sensation of fragility.

They were evidently easily frightened, as upon my little dog appearing on the scene, they immediately disappeared. Later on, and they very quietly came out again. At times they would appear to be talking. They also ran up the stalks of the flowers, as we would go up a flight of steps, only much more lightly. All that they did was in a very bright and dainty manner.

I held out my hand to them and spoke very gently. For a moment they seemed to consider, but on someone coming into the garden, they disappeared from my sight. They were dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, and were bright and happy but their build appeared to me as all of one pattern and not like human beings in a variety of forms.

In *The Faery Investigation Society Journal* of the London Lodge (December 1929), 8-9.

III. Fairy in the hair

An encounter with a Fairy: From a Correspondent in South Africa, The following was related to me by an Assistant Superintendent of the Girl's Club in Port Elizabeth, SA.

"I was staying at an old house in Gloucester, and the garden at the back ended in the forest of Birdlip Beaches, which covers part of the Cotswold Hills.

It was before the day of the shingle and I had washed my hair and was drying it in the sunshine in the forest, out of sight of the house. I was lying in the grass and it was all spread about me. Suddenly I felt something tugging at my hair and I turned to look. A most extraordinary thing met my eyes.

He was about nine inches [23cm] high and the most dreadfully ugly, dreadfully misshapen, most wrinkled and tiniest manikin I have ever seen. He was the colour of dead aspen leaves. A sort of yellow brown, with a high squeaky voice. He was caught in the strands of my hair.

He was struggling to escape and he grumbled and complained all the time, telling me I had no right to be there, troubling honest folk. That I might have strangled him with my hair. Finally he freed himself and disappeared.

I mentioned my experience afterwards to a Professor of Bristol College. He was not surprised and told me that Birdlip Beeches was one of the few places left where there were fairies and no one could go there because of it." In *The Faery Investigation Society Journal* of the London Lodge (December 1929), 9-10.

IV. Mysterious experience with the sea

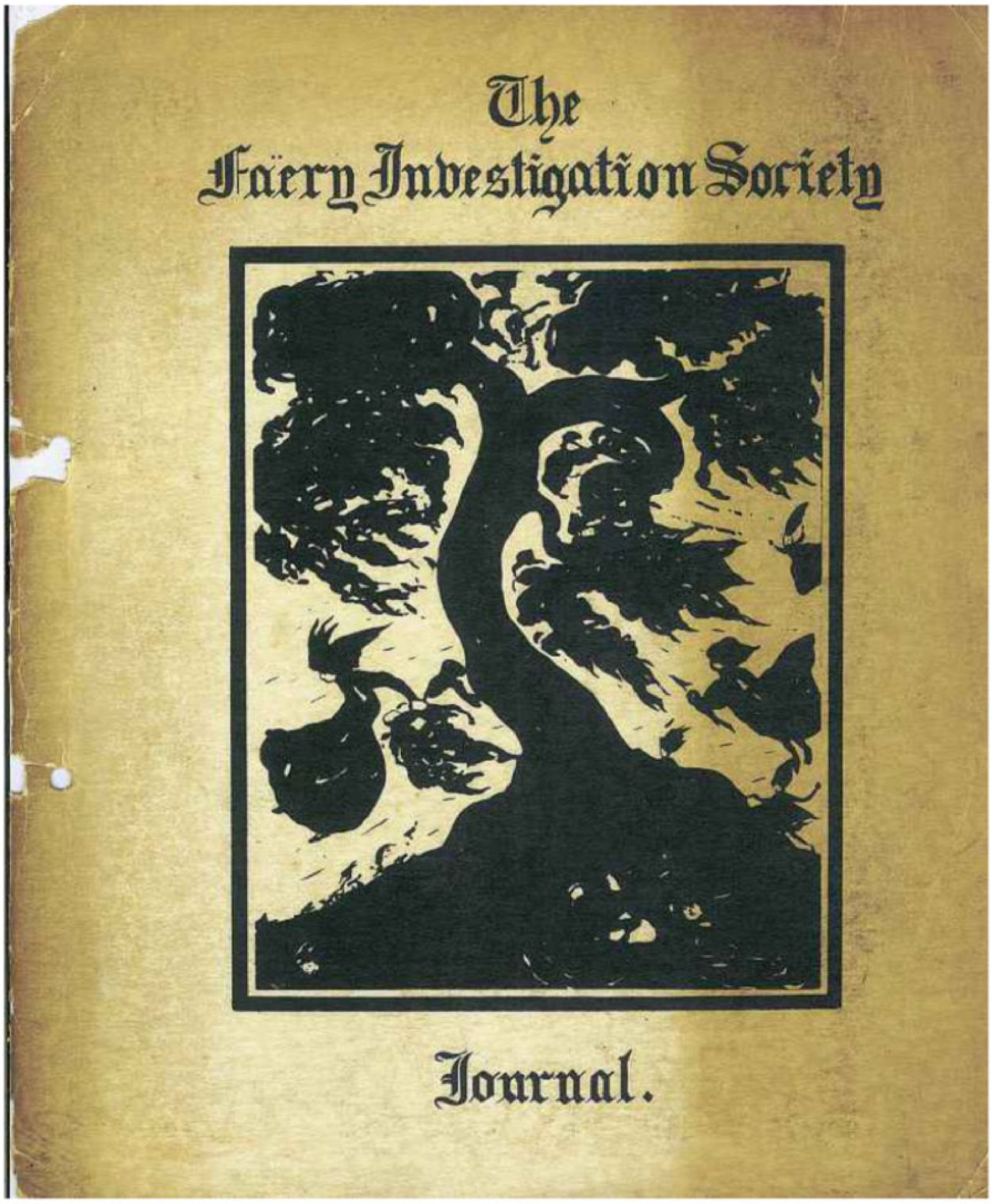
I walked beside the sea and as I walked I caught its mood; it was mocking, unfriendly and treacherous. Suddenly it seemed as though the sea had lost all its colours and the depths were apparent. They baffled description.

The sea looked a transparent white fluid and in the trough of the waves was a strange wild woman, glittering brightly with the myriad colours of the sea.

She said, "I am a Force. You will always have to reckon with me. While the world lasts I express myself in the sea. When this world goes I shall express myself in other forms." She vanished.

I think this is the explanation. The sea enters into the lives of most people. It is a force belonging to that Divinity who "shapes our destinies, rough-hew them how we will".

Extract from a letter from M Exley, South Africa. In *The Faery Investigation Society Journal* of the London Lodge (December 1929), 9-10.



ABOVE: An evocative illustration on the cover of the Fairy Investigation Society Journal.

manuscript with his name would have been given serious consideration by a London publishing house and, once published, would have reached a far wider audience than Marjorie could have managed alone.

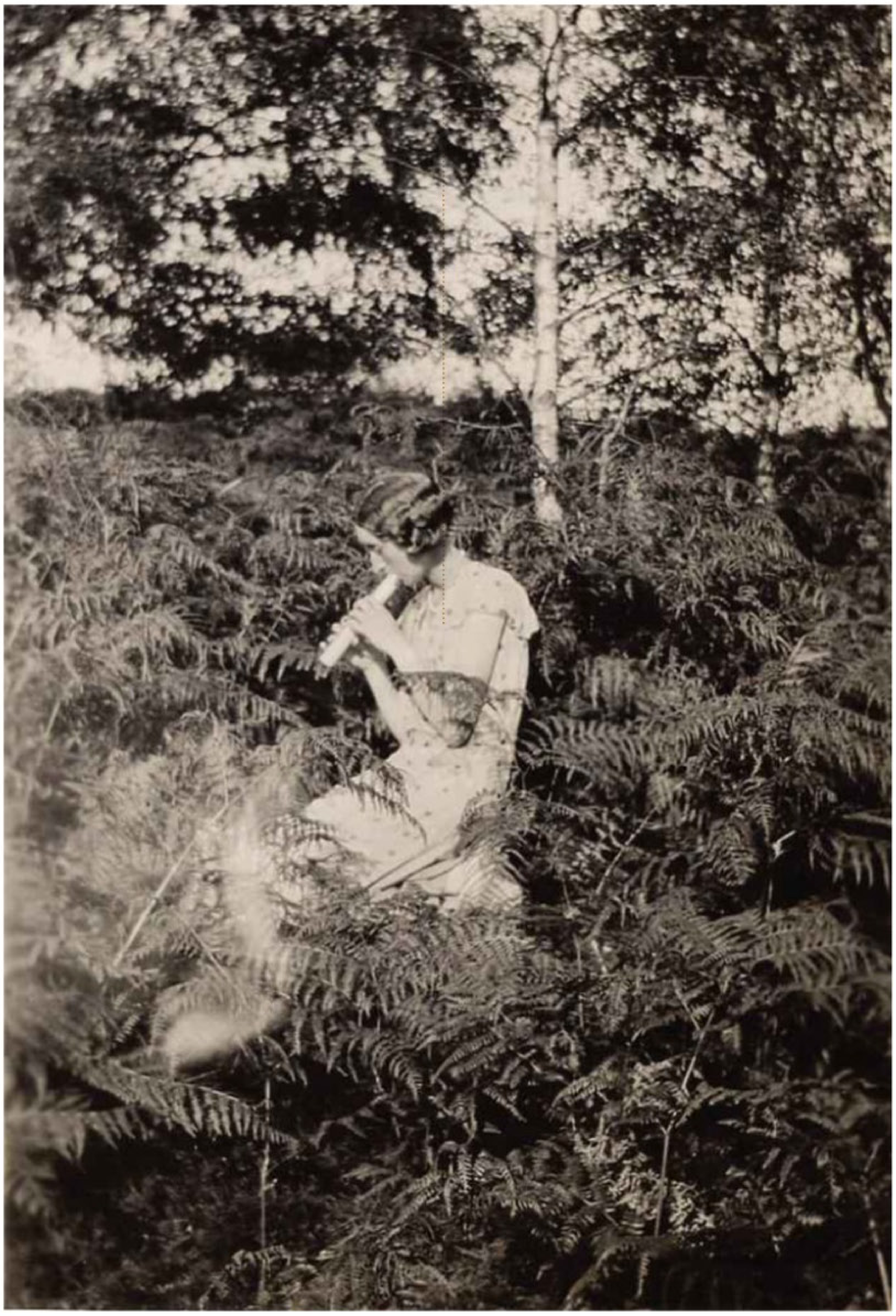
The result of these appeals were, in any case, a windfall of letters not only from the United Kingdom, but from the British dominions and the United States. As it happened, MacGregor abandoned the project sometime in 1956: he wanted to go abroad and Johnson was not prepared to wait. She said in one letter that she could not "stand any more delays"; which is somewhat ironic as *Fairy Vision* was only finally published, as *Seeing Fairies*, in 2014![21]

The collaboration was carried out and dissolved amicably – and the census had served its purpose, albeit the fruit would only be reaped 60 years later: a large proportion of the fairy sightings recorded in *Seeing Fairies* date to the appeals made by MacGregor in 1955. In the history of paranormal studies it should stand with some of the great 19th-century surveys, not least the Census of Hallucinations (1894), though it lacked their stringency.

4. THE CASE OF THE GREEN WOOD ELVES (1955-1956)

The pre-war Fairy Investigation Society had lectures, a rudimentary library and fairy stationary. The post-war FIS was, instead, a postal organisation, kept alive by letters and occasional newsletters. A membership list published in the FIS newsletter invited members to make contact with each other: and we know of some get-togethers, including four FIS members meeting for a holiday on Iona at the home of Lucy Bruce; Iona was seen as a fairy nature reserve in the 1950s.[22] There were also field trips, and green wood elves...[23]

One of the letters to land on Marjorie Johnson's doormat in Nottingham in 1955 came from a certain L Verdoye MA, FRGS. Verdoye was a teacher in a Lincolnshire school who had recently heard of some fairy sightings in the nearby wood. The sightings are interesting because they are so raw, without any obvious gloss from folklore. In fact, the description reads more like something from Lovecraft's Cthuhlu mythos, as a picknicking family, the son of one of Verdoye's pupils, find themselves confronted by the elves that time forgot.



LEFT: Marjorie Johnson, photographed playing the pipes to what she claimed was a materialising fairy. **BELOW:** Scottish folklorist Alasdair Alpin MacGregor.

> *Feeling bored at sitting, they rose and walked about together until, they found themselves in a clearing, and there they all saw some green shapes dancing in a circle, hand-in-hand. As far as L Verdoye's pupil could estimate, they were not more than nine or nine-and-a-half-inches [23-24cm] high. No expression or features could be seen on them but all had pointed green hats, long legs and arms, 'and there was,' recounted the boy, 'a sort of 'king' in the centre of the ring, with a light in his hand.' While the family stood petrified with fright, the ring of shapes opened and the 'king' went out and sat under a large dock-leaf. He curled his legs up like a human being and fanned himself with a little leaf. Mr X, the boy's father, could stand it no longer. He moved forward, and the figures all ran with incredible swiftness over towards a bank and vanished. The family searched frantically for some time then, but nothing remained.*

This letter particularly excited Marjorie Johnson, and she entered into correspondence with Verdoye. He had himself done some research in the area and had found a further witness who claimed to have seen these amorphous elves on Midsummer's Day 1943. Inspired, the schoolteacher, who described himself as a botanist, chose to spend two nights in the woods and discovered leaves laid in a curiously ordered fashion in some holes under trees. He visited the wood again in June 1956 and saw, on that occasion, that twigs had been tidied up, again in an unaccountably ordered fashion.

Ordered leaves and twigs... It's not exactly the Angels of Mons. But Marjorie Johnson and her sister Dorothy were intrigued and decided that they would visit the wood of the green elves at Whitsun 1956. They caught cross-country buses and arrived with a hand-drawn map from Verdoye. The long journey meant that they had little time. But Marjorie saw "a green, shapeless, ectoplasm mass, which may have been an embryo elf" and her sister "caught sight of a little figure crossing [a lane]". What is more, a photograph taken of a fairy mound later came out negative and the branches above their heads were rudely shaken. Never a dull moment in the FIS.

It would be interesting to know where in Lincolnshire this event took place. The location is never named, which is a practice that Marjorie Johnson often followed in order, as she saw it, to protect fairy life from inquisitive outsiders. Even the name of the informant, Verdoye, sounds as if it is assumed: it is placed in inverted commas in *Seeing Fairies*. The only clues we have are that it was next to a coniferous wood run, in 1955, by the Forestry Commission. Verdoye, in one of his letters, also wrote about "mounds that an Elizabethan manuscript said are the fairies 'closed houses'", a suspect-sounding reference and one that I've been unable to track down.

5. MARJORIE AND THE GREAT FAIRY SEX SCANDAL (1960)

The biggest problem that the FIS faced was not indifference from the general public, but ridicule. Quentin Craufurd had noted in 1929 the "unsympathetic attitude of the general public" and had to make sure that some members, who cared more for their reputation than he did, were protected. [24] Marjorie Johnson, too, had experience of sceptics, who sometimes drove her to uncharacteristic irritation. But she had also seen the good that the press could do in the Fairy Census. It was perhaps some misplaced gratitude or hope of further help that led her into an interview in October 1960 with a tabloid newspaper, *The Sunday Pictorial*.

Tabloids, fairies, eccentric Nottingham lady... It was, of course, a massacre. The article that subsequently appeared was entitled 'She Does A Kinsey on Fairies' and focused on Marjorie's views on fairy-sex. [25] Perhaps the opening bullet points are enough to give a flavour. The journalist, Tom Riley, claimed that *Fairy Vision* would reveal:

> *How fairies make love and reproduce their own kind.*
>
> *How they tend their babies in fairy 'maternity wards'.*

That fairies are bisexual and polygamous, sharing each other's wives, husbands and children.

And then followed:

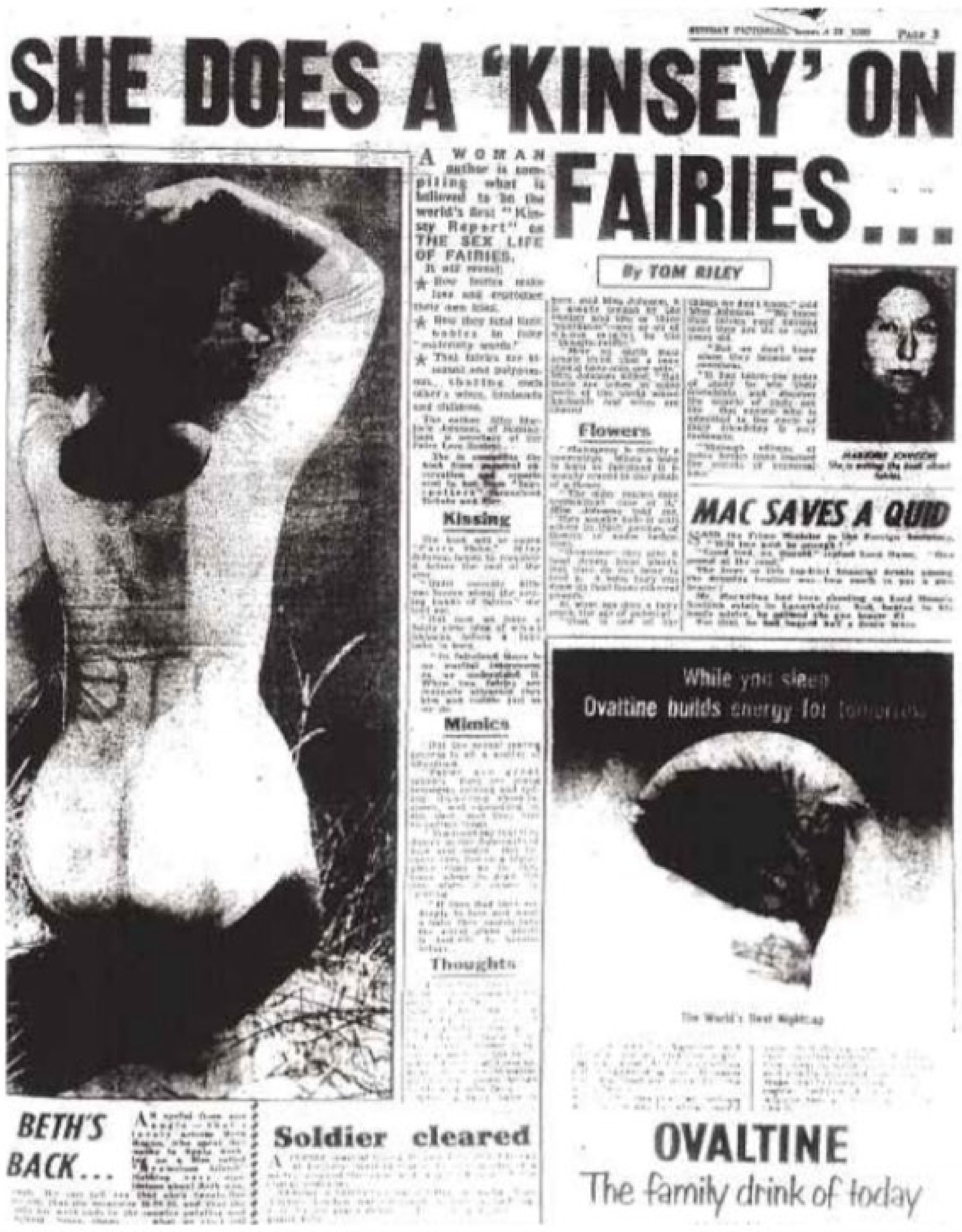
"Here on earth most people think that a man should have only one wife" Miss Johnson added. "But there are tribes in some part of the world where husbands and wives are shared."

This was 1960. The *Lady Chatterley* trial was just getting underway. This was an England where maiden aunts would swallow their dentures on hearing a word like 'bisexual' or 'polygamous' (in the unlikely event that they understood them). Marjorie Johnson, photographed in the article, comes across as a sex-crazed loon, which was extremely unfair as she was herself, in the best sense of those words, a maiden aunt.

The views given were presumably a caricature of one small part of the interview, where Johnson had offered a theosophist take on fairies. But the writer, odious as his strategy might have been, had written an article that worked. It quickly found its way around the world and was syndicated in newspapers as far away as Florida and Australia. Journalists camped out to talk to Marjorie Johnson on her doorstep [26] and even many years later, Marjorie could report that Dorothy, her sister, dreaded "sensational publicity and visits from reporters". [27] In a lower middle class quarter of Nottingham, an event like this must have been mortifying. What did the neighbours say?

Marjorie Johnson adopted a two-pronged strategy. First, she badgered the *Sunday Pictorial* to publish a letter in which she dissociated herself from the article. This was published at the end of November, but, of course, could not materially change the fact that her name and that of 'the Fairy Lore Society', as the *Pictorial* called the FIS, had been traduced. [28] Second, she wrote an FIS newsletter in which she criticised "false reporting"'. [29] The damage, though, was done. Marjorie Johnson, remembered by another member for her extreme sensitivity, began subsequently to withdraw from her involvement with the FIS and she only wrote one more newsletter, published three years later in 1963.

The history of the Fairy Investigation Society is difficult to trace at the best of times. But as Marjorie Johnson retreated from an active role in the early 1960s, the FIS all but vanishes from our records. One postwar member, Leslie Shepard, reported in 1978, in an added *vox* in Lewis Spence's *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* that "although reports of unidentified flying objects received tolerant public notice, reports of fairy sightings encouraged press ridicule." He reveals too that the FIS "is at present quiescent, but is planning to reorganise on a basis which will protect members from undesirable notice." [30] The great sex scandal of 1960 evidently cast a long shadow.



SUNDAY PICTORIAL Page 3

SHE DOES A 'KINSEY' ON FAIRIES...

A WOMAN author is compiling what is believed to be the world's first "Kinsey Report" on THE SEX LIFE OF FAIRIES.

By TOM RILEY

Kissing

Flowers

Mimics

Thoughts

MAC SAVES A QUID

While you sleep Ovaltine builds energy for tomorrow

OVALTINE

The family drink of today

BETH'S BACK...

Soldier cleared

LEFT: The sensationalist *Sunday Pictorial* article from October 1960 that caused Marjorie Johnson to withdraw from her involvement with the FIS.

It was, in fact, Leslie Shepard, a gifted British historian, who seems to have put the FIS back on some kind of active footing, taking over from Marjorie Johnson as secretary. Based in Blackrock, Dublin, Shepard was advertised as being head of the FIS in publications. But he apparently did little. David Boyle wrote a letter to Shepard c. 1990 asking about the FIS and received an incredible reply. "[David] wrote to their last known address outside Dublin… and had a strange letter back. It was from a man claiming that he knew the Society's secretary, but [the secretary] said he didn't want to talk to anybody." As Boyle noted: "Not only the fairies had disappeared, but the fairy researchers seem to have fled as well." [31]

Marjorie Johnson, who was now in her late 80s, was still trying to publish her fairy book and was still in contact with Shepard. She reported, however, in 1996, in the last draft of that work, that the FIS was "defunct". [32] It seems reasonable to assume that the FIS had ceased to operate at about the time David Boyle received his letter, though really it had never recovered from Johnson's departure as secretary in the early 1960s. FT

If anyone can shed any light in the history of the FIS from c. 1960 to c. 1990, or for that matter in any other period, then the author would love to hear from them.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

SIMON YOUNG is an historian based in Italy and a regular columnist for *FT*. He has written extensively on fairylore and is presently organising a new fairy census (www.fairyist.com/survey/) and helping to recreate the FIS for those interested in fairy folklore.

NOTES

1 Brian Hennessy, *The Emergence of Broadcasting in Britain*, 2005, p17.

2 'Experiences of Thought Communication with Animals', *New Frontiers* 1, 1947, pp25-29.

3 Anon, *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer*, London, Psychic Book Club, c.1937, p173.

4 Roger Cooper, 'Bernard Sleigh, Artist and Craftsman 1872-1954,' *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, 21, 1997, pp88-102.

5 Simon Young, 'A History of the Fairy Investigation Society, 1927-1960', *Folklore* 124, 2013, pp139-156 at p144.

6 *The Faery Investigation Society Journal*, 1929, unnumbered page.

7 Craufurd, 'Foreword' to Marjorie Johnson *Seeing Fairies*, Anomalist Books, 2014, p8.

8 'Fortune Telling Case', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 24 Jul 1928.

9 Craufurd, 'Foreword', p6.

10 Anon, *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer*, Psychic Book Club, c.1937, pp110-111.

11 Ibid. p72, p78.

12 Craufurd, 'Foreword', p6.

13 Ibid,p7.

14 Ibid, p8.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Craufurd, 'Experiences of Thought Communication with Animals', *New Frontiers* 1, 1947, pp25–29.

18 Simon Young, 'A History of the Fairy Investigation Society, 1927-1960', *Folklore* 124, 2013, pp148-149.

19 Craufurd, 'Foreword', p8.

20 Letter to the Editor, *Folklore* 66, 1955, p302.

21 Letter to Ithell Colquhoun, 30 Aug 1957.

22 Ibid.

23 For all this section, Johnson, *Seeing Fairies*, 2014, pp115-120.

24 *The Faery Investigation Society Journal*, 1929, unnumbered page.

25 *Sunday Pictorial*, 23 Oct 1960, p3.

26 Pers. Comm. Heather Guy, 16 Nov 2012: 'She woke up to reporters from all over the world camped out on her doorstep, poor Marjorie.'

27 Johnson, *Seeing Fairies* (2014), 239.

28 Sunday Pictorial, 20 Nov, p31.

29 *FIS Newsletter*, no 5, p1.

30 Spence, Vol I, p321.

31 David Boyle, 'A Bit of Magic', *The Idler* 41, 2008, pp125-129, at p127.

32 Johnson, *Seeing Fairies*, p5.

To take part in the new fairy census, visit: www.fairyist.com/survey

SEEING FAIRIES

MARJORIE T JOHNSON became secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society in 1950 and spent years collecting accounts of fairy sightings for the planned but unpublished book *Fairy Vision*. The long-delayed fruits of her labours finally saw print this year as *Seeing Fairies*, the most comprehensive collection of modern fairy encounters ever assembled. Here we present a small selection of the riches contained within its pages... including one of Marjorie's own experiences of being 'pixelated' and a detailed, early account of a fortean classic: the gnomes of Wollaton Park.

I would like to express my gratitude to all contributors, young and old, who… have written from many parts of the British Isles and overseas… the general tone of their correspondence has been one of mingled pleasure and relief, for many of these men and women have kept their fairy experiences a closely guarded secret owing to the ridicule and scepticism they received from their relatives and friends, or anyone to whom they had mentioned the subject. One lady wrote: "It is so nice to know that someone else has seen fairies besides myself. I saw them when I was a child, but I was laughed at so often that gradually I ceased to go where they were, and did not speak of them again, though my belief in them has never faltered."
– Marjorie T Johnson, in her introduction.

SPIRITS OF NATURE

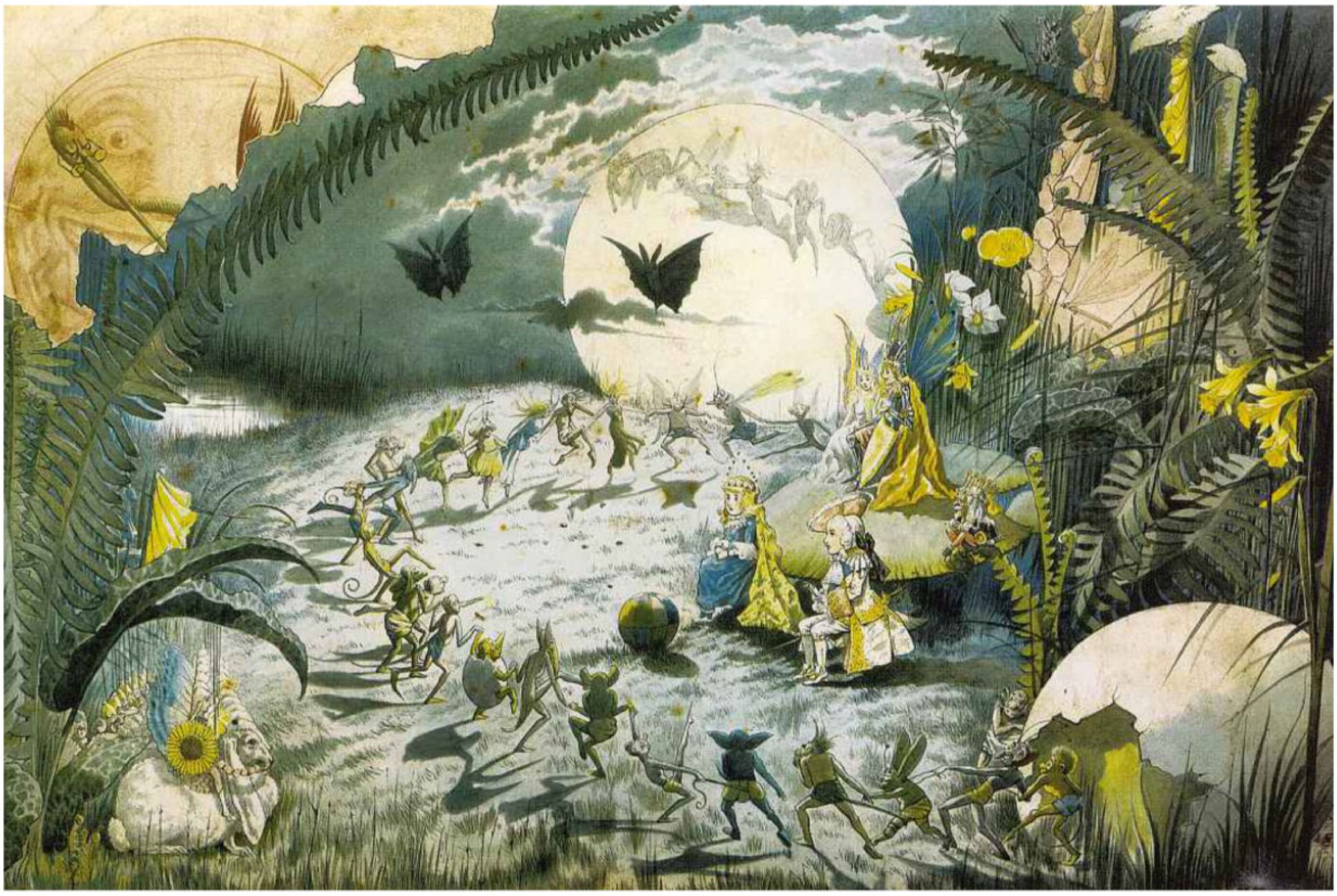
On the cold, clear, moonlit night of 24 December 1953, at about 11.35pm, Mr G was walking up a road in Ewell, Surrey, in company with two friends, Mr C and Mr F, when a small misshapen figure about five feet [1.5m] in height ran across the road in front of them. "The face could not be discerned, but one gained the impression of sharp features. The clothing was undoubtedly bottle green, and a conical hat was worn, with an edging of fur. Knee-boots completed the rig." This dwarf, or gnome, never reached the other side of the road, but disappeared about two feet [60cm] from the opposite kerb. "Unfortunately," said Mr G, "Mr F maintains to this day that he heard and saw absolutely nothing. Mr C, however, corroborates my story. We are all, without exception, teetotallers."

MRS ANDREW SAW A NUMBER OF LITTLE FOLK DANCING IN A CIRCLE AROUND THE THORN TREE

- Another contributor who was privileged to see a similar sight was Mrs Andrew Crawford Fields, of Co. Derry, Ireland. She remembered that when she was 10 years old she was standing on the side of an old fort called Lemon's Rock, near Newtownstewart, Co. Tyrone, and looking down into an adjoining field in which was a fairy thorn. It was about eight o'clock on a bright evening in July, and as she stood gazing she saw a number of little folk dancing in a circle around the tree. They were dressed in different colours, and she watched them and heard the sound of singing and sweet music for about 15 minutes, until a horse and cart came along the road at the top of the rocks, and the little folk disappeared. The fairy thorn was noted for having a brown ring around it on which the grass never grew. "And," said Mrs Fields, "we were warned as children not to go inside this ring lest the little folk should take us. The Lemon family saw them dancing many times, but I saw them only on this occasion."

- Four men, who wished their names and addresses to be withheld, thought they saw some wee folk near a large drain in Lincolnshire. The time was early evening and the sun was setting and casting reflections in the water, which at that period of the year was high and reached the top of the long grass at the sides. This made them wonder whether they were the victims of an optical illusion, the only repudiation being that not only one but all four of them were able to observe these creatures, whose clothes were of various colours: red jerkins and green breeches, yellow jerkins and mauve breeches. In height they were approximately nine inches [23cm], and both bodily and facially bore resemblance to humans. On seeing the four men, who were traversing the path near the water's edge, the little people darted into a nearby mustard-field.

- Mrs J Hanley related that while on a visit to Wales as a girl of about 18, she had been trout fishing in a mountain lake about Betws-y-Coed with a young man friend. As the light was too bright for them to hope to catch anything, they set off for home about 3 o'clock. It was a lovely afternoon of brilliant sunshine, with not a breath of wind. "Our track," she said, "was a grassy path about the



ABOVE: *A Fairy Dance* by George Cruikshank; such dancing in circles – sometimes around a tree – is a familar notion in fairy lore, and occurs in some modern encounters.

width of a farm cart and lay between banks of heather, with now and then an outcrop of rock or an old thorn tree, or some bracken and gorse, to break the outline. The mountaintop was level and one could see a good distance in all directions. As we walked along talking, I began to have that sensation most of us know at some time or another, the feeling that there was someone walking behind me. I turned instinctively and saw a little man about two feet [60cm] high, who looked rather as if he had been put together out of sticks or the twisty roots of gorse. He seemed to me to be swaggering along, mocking us, I think, as a small boy might do. I turned to my companion to say: "Look, quick!" But even as I turned, I realised that I had seen something extraordinary, and that if I made him look and there was nothing there to see, I would feel a fool. I thought I had better take another look myself first and did so, but the little figure was no longer visible, so fearing to appear childish or silly, I decided not to say anything after all to my companion. Nevertheless, I had the feeling that there were others, still watching us, to whom we were objects of derision, and that I had just happened to be quick enough to have seen one of them, caught him unawares, in fact."

• One very still evening, about the year 1921, while sitting on a seat in Westcliff, Essex, with her two sons, aged nine and 11 years respectively, Mrs FMA Southwell could hardly believe her eyes when she saw a number of gnomes in a large tree. They were about seven inches [18cm] high and were very busy gesticulating and pointing to each other, completely unaware of the human trio in their vicinity. The little creatures and their clothes were colourless, yet the jackets appeared darker than the trousers. The latter seemed in one piece with the soft-looking shoes that they wore. They had also some kind of headgear. The tree was very old with many branches, but the gnomes seemed to be treading on air between, underneath, and above the branches. Mrs Southwell did not fear them at all, yet did not find them attractive. "I kept opening and shutting my eyes," she said, "in case it was all illusion. But there they were, absolutely distinct." During this time, she had been sitting in amazed silence. Then the nine-year-old child said, "Let us get away from here." "Why?" she asked. He replied: "I seem to see little people in that tree." Mrs Southwell then turned to the other boy. "Do you see anything?" "No," he answered. She told me: "So far I had not said that I had seen the gnomes. I found it curious that one, and not the other, of my boys had seen them."

"I STARTED ON THE PATH HOME, AND THE FAIRIES WENT WITH ME"

• A strange adventure befell the late Mr Hugh Sheridan in the first week of February 1953, and Mr Willie Monks has kindly sent me this summary of his friend's statement:

"I was going home as usual across the fields from where I work at Messrs J McColloch & Sons, Gerrardstown, to my home at Bettyville. Both these places are in Ballyboughal, and the distance between them is about a half mile. I was alone. It was duskish – about 6.30 pm – and when nearing the corner of one of the fields I heard a tittering noise 'like the titter of someone going to play a joke on you.' At first I thought it was some of the other men who had gone on before me and who might be intending to play some prank. However, I noticed immediately afterwards what looked like a large, greenish tarpaulin on the ground, with 'thousands of fairies' on it. I then found there were a lot more around me. They were of two sizes, some about four feet [1.2m] high, and others about 18 or 20 [46 or 51cm] inches high. Except for size, both kinds were exactly alike. They wore dark, bluish-grey coats, tight at the waist and flared at the hips, with a sort of shoulder cape. As all the fairies kept facing me, I could not be sure if the cape went around them, but the ends stuck out over the shoulders. The covering of their legs was tight, rather like puttees, and they appeared to be wearing shoes. I started on the path towards home, and the fairies went with me in front and all around. The larger fairies kept the nearest to me. The ones in front kept skipping backwards as they went, and their feet appeared to be touching the ground. They seemed to be wearing hats rather like a raised beret in shape, with a jutting-out top edge. There were males and females, all seemingly in their early 20s. They had very pleasant faces, with plumper cheeks than those of humans, and the men's faces were devoid of hair or whiskers. I did not specially notice their hands. As I moved along the path, one tall fairy kept before me all the time. This was a girl, and a man kept near her. They seemed to have partly fair, wavy or curly hair. None of the fairies had wings. They tried to get me off the path towards a gateway leading from the field, but just before I reached it I realised they were trying to take me away, so I resisted and turned towards the path again. At about 40 yards [37m] from the gateway, I was going along by the ditch when I fell or got into it, but I do not know very clearly how this happened. While I was in it, the fairies remained around, and I could see others coming out of the bushes and briars. I got out of the ditch and continued towards the path until I reached it again. I moved on towards home with the fairies around me, and they kept up the tittering noise all the time. In the end I got to a plank leading across a ditch from one field to another, and suddenly all the fairies went away. They seemed to go back, with the noise gradually fading. At one time I had reached out my arms to try to catch them, but I cannot be sure whether they skipped back just out of reach, or whether my hands passed through them without feeling anything. They were smiling and pleasant all the time, and I could see their eyes watching me. When I got home, I found I was about three-quarters of an hour late, but I thought I had been delayed only a few minutes. While the fairies were with me, I had a rather exciting feeling 'like being on a great height,' but I was in no way afraid. I would very much like to meet them again."

- When Mary Oliver was 11 years old, she saw a little fairy man. Her family had an island in the Muskoka lakes in Canada, and on this island was a brook spanned by a bridge. Her mother used to send her to the other side of the island at sunset to fetch the evening mail, and she had to pass through the woods as it was getting dark. Always she used to feel frightened when nearing the brook . She would be seized by an inexplicable feeling of terror and would return to the camp incoherent with fright. Even in the daylight she was afraid of this wood and the brook. Then, one very hot day at noon, she was so frightened of crossing the bridge that she fell down on the path and just lay there, too weak to get up. With her head pillowed on a mossy bank, she looked up at the sky through the trees, and finding that she was very dizzy, she started to go to sleep when right in front of her nose a little man, wearing a wintergreen-berry on his head, came out of a hole in the ground. He made an effort to talk to her, but she could not understand what he said. He seemed to be very cocky and proprietary about his little hole, and she could see she was not welcome. She marked the place and went home feeling quite happy.

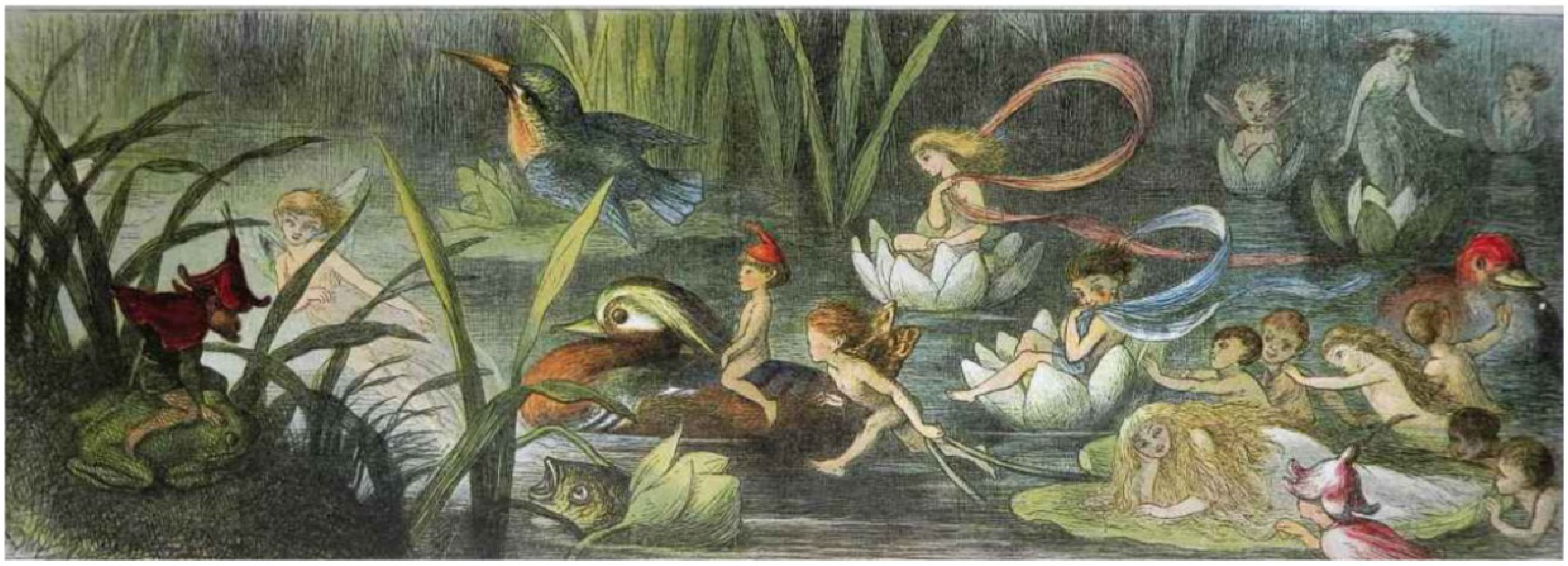
After seeing the little man, she was no longer frightened to cross the bridge. In fact, she used to leave the camp specially to go and look for him, but although she found the hole she never saw him again.

- One morning in November 1949, Miss Ruby D Johnson of County Kildare was seated in the Dublin-bound bus that leaves Poulaphuca (a Gaelic place-name signifying Pool of the Pooka, or Puck's Pool) at about 7.30am. Just as the bus was starting off, she glanced idly through the window and was amazed to see a tiny child busily gathering something from the nettles and weeds that fringed the roadside. It was dressed entirely in whitecap, coat, and leggings. Miss Johnson's amazement was due to the fact that the child was about the size of a seven-month-old baby, and yet was able to walk. She was also very surprised that such a small child should be allowed out in the bitterly cold semi-darkness of a wintry morning. "I clutched my companion and tried to draw her attention to the little figure," she said, "But my companion could not see it at all, and the other passengers in the bus began to eye me strangely!"

- I received Mr Michael A Nevin's account of what occurred one Midsummer evening in the year 1917.

Mr Bernard McMahon was driving his uncle's cows to a field beside the fox covert in Thaula, about four miles [6km] from Loughrea in Co. Galway, and Mr Nevin was accompanying him. On reaching the gate leading into the field, they were letting the cows in when a big blaze shot up in the centre of the covert, and one of the men remarked what a terrible thing it was that someone had set it on fire, covered as it was with furze and gorse bushes and trees, which extended over three acres [1.2ha]. The flames rose high for several minutes, then died out suddenly, and the two onlookers were just expressing their relief that the person who started the fire had extinguished it, when it blazed up again, and they watched it for another few minutes until it died down again as before. This was repeated about 10 times, but each time it flared up it remained alight for a shorter period, until the final blaze just shot up and died away on the instant. Then, from the same spot, out came hundreds of little men on their hands and knees. They crawled along by the fence until they came to a point about 100 yards [90m] further on, and as each one reached it he disappeared. The two men watched this strange procession for at least three minutes, and still it went on, so they decided to rush to McMahon's uncle's house, where the neighbours gathered in the evenings, and bring them all up to see this queer sight. The neighbours returned with them, running as fast as they could – the total distance being 400 yards [366m] – but when they reached the covert there was no trace of the little people, or anything unusual. Naturally, they were disappointed and rather angry, and some of the boys accused the men of playing a joke on them. The scene of the fire was revisited the next day, but not a trace of any ashes could be found, and not a blade of the long grass seemed to have been disturbed. Yet Mr Nevin and Mr McMahon had stood only 100 yards from the phenomenon, and had seen it quite clearly in the twilight just after sunset.

Twenty years later, again at twilight, a young woman named Mary Alton, who had



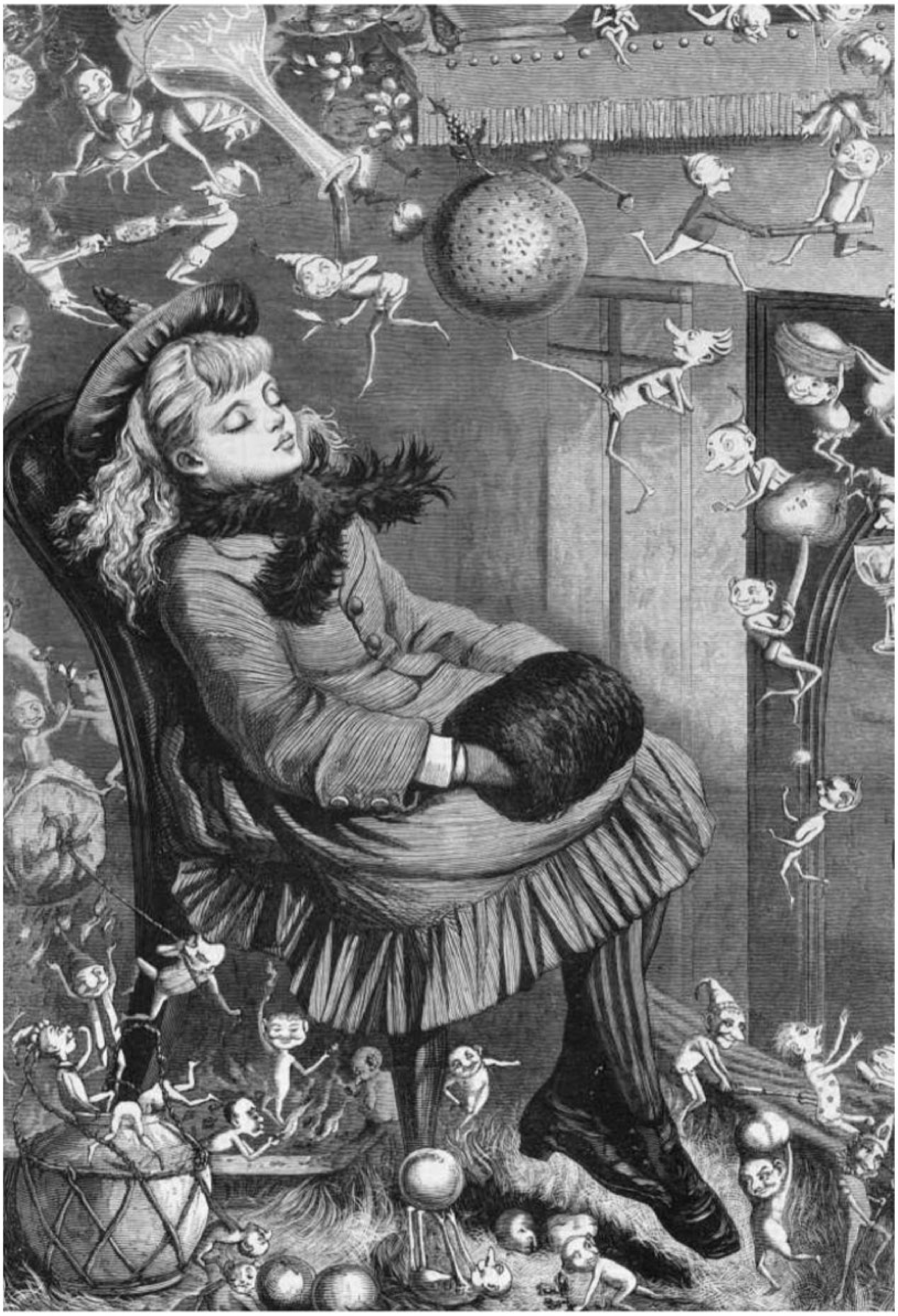
ABOVE: The link between the Little People and other inhabitants of the non-human, natural world is seen in this illustration by Richard Doyle, from his 1870 book *In Fairyland*.

never heard of the previous occurrence in the covert, was returning home after visiting a friend's house. While she was walking along a lane by the same field, she saw a similar display of shooting flames, but unlike the other witnesses she did not stay long enough to see any little people appear. She was so frightened that she fled straight back to the house she had just left and remained there until morning!

- Mrs Maxwell met someone in Devonshire whose cousin was one day sitting on an old log in the dense woods of Berry Pomeroy Castle (on the edge of Dartmoor), when "out of the corner of her eye" she saw something move at the end of the log. It was a pixie, wearing a little cap and jerkin, and he looked very annoyed at seeing her there. Suddenly he sprang up, ran along the log, slapped her face, and disappeared!

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN

The house in Kent in which Felicity E Royds lived as a child was modern but had been built near a knoll, where, she said, "We often found prehistoric flint implements, and there was a sunken ditch running through the garden, which according to tradition was the track of an old British (not Roman) road."
It was one cold, grey summer evening when Felicity, aged eight or nine, had returned home late along with others after visiting some cousins who had been frightening her with ghost stories. She found she had left some object – her coat or a toy – in the rose garden, and was sent back alone to fetch it. The rose garden was surrounded by thick yew hedges, and at the end of it was a cast-iron gate leading into a thicket of rhododendrons. The object, which she had gone to fetch, was on the grass near this gate, and she had just retrieved it and was turning away, fearful of what might come out of the bushes, when she saw coming through the gate a small man leading a light brown horse. The man was shorter than Felicity and appeared to be wearing a blue tunic with something white at the neck. His skin was very brown, browner than his hair. The pony was about the size of a Shetland but very slender. Although she did not feel frightened, Felicity did not look at the man directly, only out of the corner of her eye. He put his hand on her wrist, and his touch was cool, not cold like a fish or lizard but much cooler than a human touch. He led her out of the rose garden and onwards until they were within sight of the house, and then stood still while she went in. She said that she was not at all musical, but while he held her hand she seemed to be aware of a strain of music that was sweet and high but sounded rather unfinished. Some nine years later she again heard the same strain coming from the knoll, but although she went out to investigate she was unable to see anything.


ABOVE: All kinds of Little People apear to be invading a domestic space in this 1880 Kate Greenaway illustration.

- When the Rev S Henshaw was a child of about six, he was playing with his sister in the garden of a house in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, and, tiring of their games, he suggested that they should roll a log over, which had long lain lengthways by a boundary fence. When they had done this, there was disclosed a strange creature about six inches [16cm] in height, standing straddle-legged across a hole in the ground, which was approximately three inches [8cm] in diameter. The creature had the obvious shape of a man. He was completely naked, if one does not count the section of an onion that he wore as a cap. His beard and his hair, which protruded from the back of his "cap," were straw coloured. "The incident," said Mr Henshaw, "struck me as an occasion for action, so I ordered my sister to fetch a pair of scissors from the house a few yards away that I might cut him in two. Losing patience because she was so long gone, I remember looking towards the door of the house, and when I returned my gaze to where I had seen the pixy he had disappeared. I believe he had gone up the pear tree beyond the boundary fence. I will not go into the clever suggestions that are supposed to explain this and similar experiences for I have read much if not all that modern psychology has to say on the matter. The fact is that my sister and I remember it as vividly as ever, though it happened so many years ago."

- The second time Mrs Bramley-Moore saw fairies was a year or two before the Second World War, when she was living at her cottage at Prestwood, in Buckinghamshire. Her bedroom faced east, and she used to lie in bed and watch the sun rise. Beside the window was an old apple-tree. It was dead, but she refused to have it cut down because she found its shape so beautiful. One morning she awoke in the pale light of dawn. The birds had not started to call, and the sun was still below the horizon. She rose from her bed and stood looking out of the window. It was then she noticed five grey "lumps" on the old apple-tree. They looked most peculiar, and she peered at them closely. They appeared to be shrouded in some pale grey material, a thin, cobwebby kind of chiffon. She still had not the slightest idea of what she was seeing until suddenly one moved and straightened up. It was some kind of fairy that had been sitting on a branch in a crouching position, its head covered by its arms, which were resting on its knees. It gave a weird little cry, like the sound of a tiny bell, then it suddenly launched itself forward and flew off due north, travelling at a tremendous rate, its garment fluttering behind it. It was followed almost immediately by its companions. One after another they sat up and launched themselves head first into the air. "These five had no visible wings. They flew through the air still in a crouching position – they might almost have been riding invisible broomsticks." It was then rapidly becoming light; the first birdcall was heard, and Mrs Bramley-Moore returned thoughtfully to her bed.

• During WWII, Mrs MA Rodliff occupied her aunt's house in Harrow. She had many psychic experiences, but none so wonderful as that relating to the fairy vision she had there. On a night when the moon was full, she saw from the threshold of her back door what appeared to be glow-worms in the neglected wartime garden, but as she stood watching them they began to move in a manner that glow-worms never do. They had become a dozen or more gnomes, skipping merrily on the tops of the Brussels sprouts. In height they ranged from a foot to roughly 20 inches [30-50cm] and were dressed as if for a party, some in green coats and hats, some in red coats and hats, others in mauve. "They were definitely having such fun," she said. "Soon they left the Brussels-tops to dance on the lawn close at hand, and to run hither and thither in great elation. Though I was transfixed with surprise, I was truly delighted to see them. There was such merriment that I, too, felt happy and couldn't tear myself away from the back door." Mrs Rodliff added that this vision remained with her as clearly as any experience of her life, and she could recall the sense of wellbeing and joy it instantly communicated. Her sole regret was that those to whom she related this unique experience were apt to laugh at her, "and this," she said, "is why I'm glad to pass on my account to anybody sympathetic enough to accept it."

FURRY FAIRIES?

[A] fairy seer, Mrs Georgina K Evason, of Kent, said she had certainly perceived some "very comical cats, half-finished looking," as though they were in process of trying to materialise or develop. These had always been indoors, and she took them to be "subjective pictures of undeveloped creatures at a certain stage of progression."

• In 1956, Mr AW Smith, B.A., of Essex, wrote: "My little girl (she will be two in October) persistently insists that there are 'pussies' all over our house, and on one occasion when she was trying hard to get me to look at one I felt a distinct 'chill' and a positive sense of physical 'malaise.' Incidentally, a little girl in the house opposite ours was most unwilling to sleep in her new bedroom (when the family moved in) because she said there were pussycats playing in the room. There is no question of one child influencing the other."

• It may have been another creature of this type that Mrs Martha C Smith of Indiana saw in her large basement. "It is fairly dark there," she explained, "and only part of the floor is finished. The other part is dirt trampled down very hard. I had gone down to get a box when suddenly I was conscious of a tiny noise behind me, such as a mouse or small rat would make. I turned, and over against a wall I saw a little object about the size of a half-grown cat, which I thought it was until I realised it was standing on its two legs. It was a musty dark colour, with an animal-like face, and had what appeared to be a furry-looking coat and brownish-coloured pants. Its feet were more like an animal's than those of the other little people I have seen, and its features were pointed and coarse looking. It had no hat, but just a bunch of rough fur, and when it sped out of sight it jumped like a rabbit instead of walking upright as humans do. I was also conscious of an unpleasant odour. I have been down several times since, hoping to see it again, but all I can find is a little mark on the floor like that left by the three toes of a chicken."

THEY WERE DRESSED AS IF FOR A PARTY, IN COATS AND HATS

• In the 1950s, Mrs Jessie Kay Scott and her husband were listening to the wireless on New Year's Eve in their home in Kent when there came from behind the grandfather clock "two furry brown little creatures," which commenced to dance in front of the radio. Both husband and wife watched them in amazement, until at last one of the tiny figures darted on to Mrs. Scott's shoulder and thence to the couch, where it disappeared. "They had such lovely brown twinkling eyes," she wrote. "We have never seen anything like this before in our lives."

• Mrs ED, of Cheshire, had a similar experience when a pixie, like a little brown-skinned or furry animal in appearance, with ears shaped like ivy leaves, was seen by her in daylight. Its height was five or six inches [13-15cm], and it stood against a chair leg for a few seconds, and then vanished.

THE GNOMES OF WOLLATON PARK

On 23 September 1979, several children between the ages of eight and 10 were playing together in the grounds of Wollaton Hall – an Elizabethan Mansion in Nottingham – when out of the bushes came a number of merry-faced, bearded little men in small cars – two in each car. The children who shared this experience were Angela, her sister Julie and brother Glen; Andrew and his sister Rosie; and Patrick. They were pupils of a primary school, and their head-teacher very kindly sent me a tape of his separate interviews with three of the children, Angela, Patrick, and Andrew, which he had recorded two days after the sighting. In his covering letter he said: "I think the tape reveals the wide measure of corroboration between the children, as well as the fluency with which they were able to describe the events. I remain sceptical as to the explanation of what they saw, but I am also convinced that the children were describing a real occurrence." As these three recordings follow the same pattern of questioning, they are not here set out verbatim, but the story is as follows: The three girls and three boys were playing near a swampy part of the grounds at dusk, when Andrew said, "Look at the little men." Julie replied, "Don't be stupid," but then about 30 cars came out of the bushes and through a little gate, one after another, and Julie said "You're right" and apologised to Andrew. The little men in the cars began to chase them, though not, as it turned out, with any intention of harming them. Naturally, the appearance of these gnome-like creatures in such large numbers created some fear and confusion. Angela said her brother Glen was crying because he was "scared", and Patrick said that Andrew fell over a log as he was running away and went head-first into the swampy ground. When asked afterwards how the cars crossed the logs, which lay over the swamp, he said they just leapt over them, and although there were at least 30 cars there was no sound of engines. They seemed to be of simple construction and of various colours. Angela saw red and white cars; Andrew saw green and blue ones, and said they had "a thing they could turn round, with a handle on it." Patrick saw them in red and other shades, and he said they had triangular lights on them, and bells in place of motor horns. While

ABOVE: The grounds of Wollaton Park Hall, Nottinghamshire, were the location for one of the most curious of modern encounters with the Little People.

he was looking at them, 10 of the little men got out and walked. Although the cars had been driven close to the children, at no time had they actually touched them. Angela mentioned that she had returned to the same spot in daylight but had found no trace of car wheels on the swampy ground. The account of these cars may tax the credulity of some readers, but nature spirits have the power to visualise and create out of universal thought-substance a simple etheric imitation of anything that takes their fancy, and the gnomes may have seen small children trundling along in toy cars, and may also have witnessed the car rallies, which are held from time to time in Wollaton Park. To the schoolchildren, the little men's cars would seem solid (materialised), but they could have vanished like puffs of smoke if the gnomes had turned their attention to something else. Both Angela and Patrick said the long beards of the gnomes were white, with red at the tips, whereas to Andrew they looked black. There may be a simple optical explanation for this, but fairy visions are often coloured by something in the seer's own personality, and even two or more of the best seers, when sharing a psychic or occult experience, have been known to differ widely when trying to describe the details. Angela, who thought the little men were "similar to a dwarf" in type, recorded that they were dressed in "yellow tights with blue thin tops," and each of them wore a cap with "a big bobble" at the end. Patrick, in his statement, said their hats were green "with red pom-poms," and he confirmed that their trousers were yellow and their tops blue. Andrew, when asked what he thought the little men were, replied "Gnomes, or summat," and said there was "something green" on them. When asked to describe the shape of their headgear, he said it was "like the night caps people wore in olden days when they went to bed," and he was reminded of "Noddy". He agreed their tops were blue, and he thought their trousers had yellow patches. He mentioned that he had seen other little men in the bushes within the wired fence; in holes in the tree-trunks; and also up in the trees. (Angela and Patrick omitted to confirm in their tape recording that they, also, had seen these beings up in the trees, but they had mentioned this earlier, to a reporter.) When Andrew was asked why he could see the gnomes' faces so clearly in the dusk, he said there was "a light hanging in the trees" where the gnomes were. When asked what sort of a light, he hesitated and then said: "An ordinary light because when we looked up there was a light." This seems very improbable unless it was a streetlight shining through the trees, for the children admitted that it was a fenced off area, which they had managed to enter by crawling through a gap. When Patrick was asked a similar question about the gnomes, which he saw on the ground, he said he thought it was their bright clothing, which enabled him to see them so plainly. "I could see 'em in the dark – they showed up," he told the head-teacher. Both of these boys had tried to give a practical explanation for something they did not fully understand. Neither of them knew that the materialised bodies of nature spirits are self-luminous, and this may also account for the light in the trees, which Andrew mentioned earlier. When the children were leaving the park, they were chased round the gate, so they started to climb over it. Then, on finding it was still unlocked, they ran through the gateway as fast as they could, and the gnomes went back in the bushes inside the wired fence. They had made no attempt to follow the children, and Angela said this was because they did not like the streetlights outside. (That being so, the gnomes would surely not have been in a tree where an "ordinary light" was hanging.) There was some difference of opinion over the time the children had entered and left the park, but Angela and Patrick thought that during the period of their stay the gnomes had played with them for about a quarter of an hour. They said they had glimpsed them before, during the school holidays, but on that occasion the little men, on seeing them, had gone back into the bushes. Andrew had heard the sound of bells, which proved on the second occasion to be the car bells. There was complete agreement that the gnomes – which Patrick said were up to his waist in height and

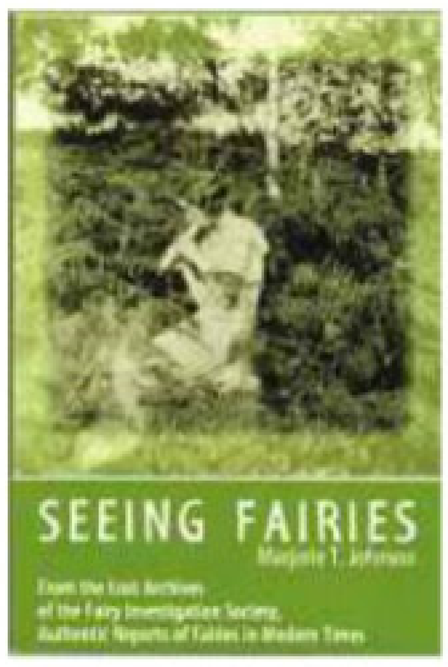
THE LONG BEARDS OF THE GNOMES WERE WHITE, WITH RED AT THE TIPS

Angela said were half her size – had old, wrinkled faces; were very friendly and happy ("joyful" was the word Angela used); and they laughed a lot while they were playing. None of the children heard them speak, but Patrick said some of the gnomes appeared to be "shouting" to others who had gone too far, though no sounds were audible. Needless to say, this weird occurrence attracted the attention of the press, and many people flocked to the area in the hope of catching a glimpse of the fairy men. Unfortunately such an intrusion creates the wrong atmosphere and drives nature spirits deeper into their own element. One of my contributors, Mrs I W Ratsey, said in her book *Pioneering* (Universal World Harmony), that the ray of curiosity is a cold ray and therefore repelling to the Little People, so they hide away from it because it makes them feel uneasy and they do not understand it. Fantastic though the children's story must have sounded to their disbelieving parents, there are several features that stamp it as genuine… I think there is a large, and possibly ancient, tribe of gnomes in Wollaton Park. Perhaps, in between their valuable work with nature, they live in a world of glamour, acting-out among themselves the numerous exciting and colourful events that take place in other parts of the grounds, especially during the Nottingham Festival.

ABOVE: Marjorie Johnson celebrated her 100th birthday in 2011. Sadly, she died later that year and so never got to see her book make it, at long last, into print.

MARJORIE'S PIXILATION

After receiving the foregoing accounts [of being pixie-led], I thought how interesting it must be to be pixilated, little dreaming that many years later, on 31 March 1979, I would have a similar experience – in a large, well-known cemetery, of all places! I had been up the same road to the chapel at the top of the hill many times before, to attend the funerals of various friends and relatives, but on this day I had gone just to look in the Memorial Book. Although it may have no relevance to the experience that followed, I had better mention that the outer door to the Memorial Chapel seemed to be locked, and I pulled and struggled for several minutes without avail. I couldn't understand it, because the door was always opened at a certain time every morning, before people arrived for funeral or cremation services. I seemed to be the only person in the cemetery and had just given up in despair when two men arrived in a car. I asked them if they could help me, and both of them struggled with the door, but with no success. Then one of them said, "Wait here, and we'll drive to the office at the entrance and ask for the key." They returned looking rather puzzled. "The people in the office told us that the door isn't locked," said one of the men. "It doesn't stick and should open easily." As he spoke he turned again to try the door, and it opened at once! The two men seemed to have come just to look at one of the graves, and by the time I came out of the Memorial Chapel they had gone. I felt strangely uneasy about the door incident; there seemed something queer about the atmosphere, and I was anxious to get away from the place as soon as I could. I started back down the hill only to find that the road had altered! It should have been straight, but was now curved. I couldn't understand it, but there seemed to be only one explanation possible. As there are several parallel roads in the cemetery, perhaps, absent-mindedly, I had taken a different one, but I knew that all of them joined a horizontal road at the bottom of the hill and that this would lead me back to the entrance gates, so I was not unduly worried. I continued walking for another few yards and then stood still in utter bewilderment. The road had become very narrow and ended in a small, purposeless loop, the inside of which could not have been more than three feet [90cm] long and two feet wide [60cm]. I looked around me and saw several other paths on either side, much narrower, but when I followed them I found that they, too, ended in loops. After exploring the last of them, I turned back to the road, but it had disappeared and, apart from a large old thorn-tree under which I found myself standing, only gravestones were there. I looked down to where the long, horizontal road should be, which would have led to the entrance gates. It wasn't there; the gravestones reached right to the bottom railings. I seemed to be near one end of the cemetery, but there was no way out. There were railings along the side, and beyond them there appeared to be a road, but with no signs of life on it. Then I noticed, for the first time, two plain-looking brick houses within the railings, which seemed to have sprung up suddenly not far from where I was standing. Anyone reading this will wonder why I didn't go to one of them to ask for help. I couldn't, because I was filled with apprehension. I knew that they hadn't been there the moment before, and if they had been real houses there would have been a gate in the railings to give ingress and egress to the occupants. The air was deathly still, and by that time I had realised – especially when I thought of the paths with their nonsensical loops – that the fairies were playing tricks on me. I did not want to be offered any of their etheric food, as it has a strange effect and can make the recipient very otherworldly. So I went away from the houses and walked in the opposite direction, trying to pick my way between the gravestones, which now stretched ahead of me, seemingly for miles. I did not relish the thought of having to spend the night there, and I knew that my sister would be wondering what had become of me. Then I thought of shaking myself and twisting my body around to shatter the existing vibrations, at the same time declaring that the divine spirit within me was all-powerful. Instantly the spell was broken: I saw a straight road, and on rushing up it I found myself back at the chapel. From there I was able to see the road up which I had come originally, and that led me safely down to the entrance gates. I arrived home very late and, fortunately for me, my sister believed my story because she could see how shaken and exhausted I was. I could not get the experience out of my mind, and felt I must go again to make quite sure how much of the scenery really had been transformed on that day. I begged my sister to go with me, and we went some months later. The landscape on this occasion was back to normal, and we were able to confirm that the roads had no loops, and that they led straight down to the road, which lay horizontally along the bottom of the cemetery. There were no tiny paths with loops, and where I had seen gravestones reaching to the railings there was only a wide grass verge. As I had suspected, there were no houses where I had seen the two standing. **FT**


SEEING FAIRIES
Marjorie T. Johnson
From the Lost Archives of the Fairy Investigation Society, Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times

Seeing Fairies: From the Lost Archives of the Fairy Investigation Society, Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times **by Marjorie T Johnson (with an introduction by S Young) is published by Anomalist Press, 2014, priced £13.99/$19.95.**

THE MUSIC OF FAIRYLAND

The Little People have long been associated with music. Composers, artists, writers and observers of the natural world have all reported unearthly strains hovering in the air, and some have even attempted to write them down. **CHRIS WOODYARD** keeps her ears open and listens for the lovely and mysterious sounds of Fairyland.

"Fairyland is a place of delights, where music, and singing, and dancing, and feasting are continually enjoyed…" wrote WY Evans-Wentz in *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries.* Most chroniclers of the Good People tell of the fairy obsession with music and dancing. Fairy music bridged the gap between the world of man and the world of the *sidhe*, enticing the hearer to join in the dance. But what does fairy music actually sound like?

"Miss Stella Watson often heard minute, bell-like notes in her lakeside garden in Surrey… She described the music as being like that played on tiny hand-bells, or which might result from striking fine wine-glasses with a glass rod – very clear and sweet." [1]

In 1922, musician Dr Thomas Wood was camping on Dartmoor when he heard "the last thing I expected to hear… *music in the air!* It was overhead, faint as a breath. It died away, came back louder, over me, swaying like a censer that dips. It lasted 20 minutes… My field glasses assured me no picnickers were in sight. It was not a gramophone nor was it an illusory noise in my ears. This music was essentially harmonic, not a melody nor an air. It sounded like the weaving together of tenuous fairy sounds…" [2] (See www.fairyist.com/what-is-a-fairy/what-is-fairy-music-like/ for a recording of Dr Wood's fairy music transcription as well as several other fairy tunes.)

In 1933, Miss Lucy Walpole and her sister lived in a house called "Fiery Mount," at Ufford in Suffolk. "Miss Walpole's sister heard on several occasions [at dawn] the sound, as if in the far distance, of a simple little tune [of about six notes] being played, and it was, she said, like the plucking of the strings of a tiny harp or other stringed instrument… repeated many times." [3]

"SHE DESCRIBED THE MUSIC AS LIKE THAT PLAYED ON TINY HAND-BELLS…"

ABOVE: Dartmoor, where composer Thomas Wood heard "music in the air" on a trip in 1922. **FACING PAGE:** *The Piper Of Dreams* (1914), by British artist and folklorist Estella Canziani.

FOX PHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES

MUSIC IN THE AIR

These three stories demonstrate some of the leitmotifs found in the world of fairy music: ethereal and high-pitched, heard in the air, and repetitive.

The high pitch of the music is nearly universal: "like tiny flutes," "tinkling," "the dulcet sound of tiny bells." Bells or Æolian harps are the most commonly described instruments, although glass harmonica, harp, flute, and violin are also reported. There may be a physical rationale for this. While discussing acoustics for this article, an engineer of my acquaintance pointed out that the Little People must have very small eardrums and very small larynxes. "Perhaps," he said, "they can only hear and make high-pitched sounds!"

Fairy music hovers in the air or is said to swirl, circle, or fly around the hearer. Frequently, it is heard in the open air and near water, rather than indoors. Liminal and geolithic spots were particularly associated with fairy music: bridges, rocks, and boundary markers. Some fairy music was reported as coming from underground – beneath fairy raths, or inside rocks or standing stones.

Fairy music often manifests in repetitive phrases, aiding musicians who wish to transcribe it. This example is from the Island of Barra, Outer Hebrides, related by Iain Dahl, an author and painter: "One still, warm August day [c.1923-1930] I followed the rough track that leads from Upper Borve… to Skallary… With me was Miss X, a friend who has come in contact with the fairy world herself, and has heard chords and musical sounds in lonely places… At the point where the pass is narrowest, a great rock overhangs

the approach, and here we both stopped dead, halted by a tiny, stinging note like a silver trumpet. Music seemed to be coming from somewhere inside the rock – a short, repetitive phrase, rather like the tenor voice of a cello or the lower notes of a clarinet. We listened, and Miss X quickly drew out a notebook lined for musical notation, and began to jot down what she heard. This was made possible by the fact that the phrase was repeated more than once, returning on itself, so that I, who do not write music but have 'a good ear for picking up tunes,' was able to memorise it; it was almost as though the rock were announcing a 'signature-tune…'"

The author also reported hearing a three-note call: "The fairy call in answer to which Mary Rose disappeared in JM Barrie's play," and several weeks later met an artist who had heard the same call in the same valley.[4]

Mary Rose made its debut in 1920 with music especially composed for it by Irish composer Norman O'Neill. Had he been to this valley and heard the "call"? Or were the hearers overlaying a tune they knew on the random sounds of nature?

Fairy music is also elusive. Those who seek for a source do not find it. The actual musicians are rarely seen, although there are stories of fairy musicians in Marjorie Johnson's *Seeing Fairies*: two marching bands of musicians, one in Kent and one, of gnomes, in Germany; a fairy fiddler seen in a rose; and "small beings with musical instruments" in a Scottish wood.

THE MYSTERIOUS MUSIC OF DEATH

The late D Scott Rogo wrote two definitive books on anomalous music, *NAD: A Study of Some Unusual "Other-World" Experiences* (1970) and *A Psychic Study of "The Music of the Spheres" (NAD, Volume II)* (1972), which describe mystic music associated with dying, near-death experiences, and out-of-body experiences in terms such as "angelic" "out of this world," and "heavenly". Fairy music shares similarities with these anomalous experiences, yet inexplicably, there is no mention of fairy music in Rogo's survey, although there are many descriptions of "Æolian harps" and high-pitched singing of unearthly beauty, heard overhead.

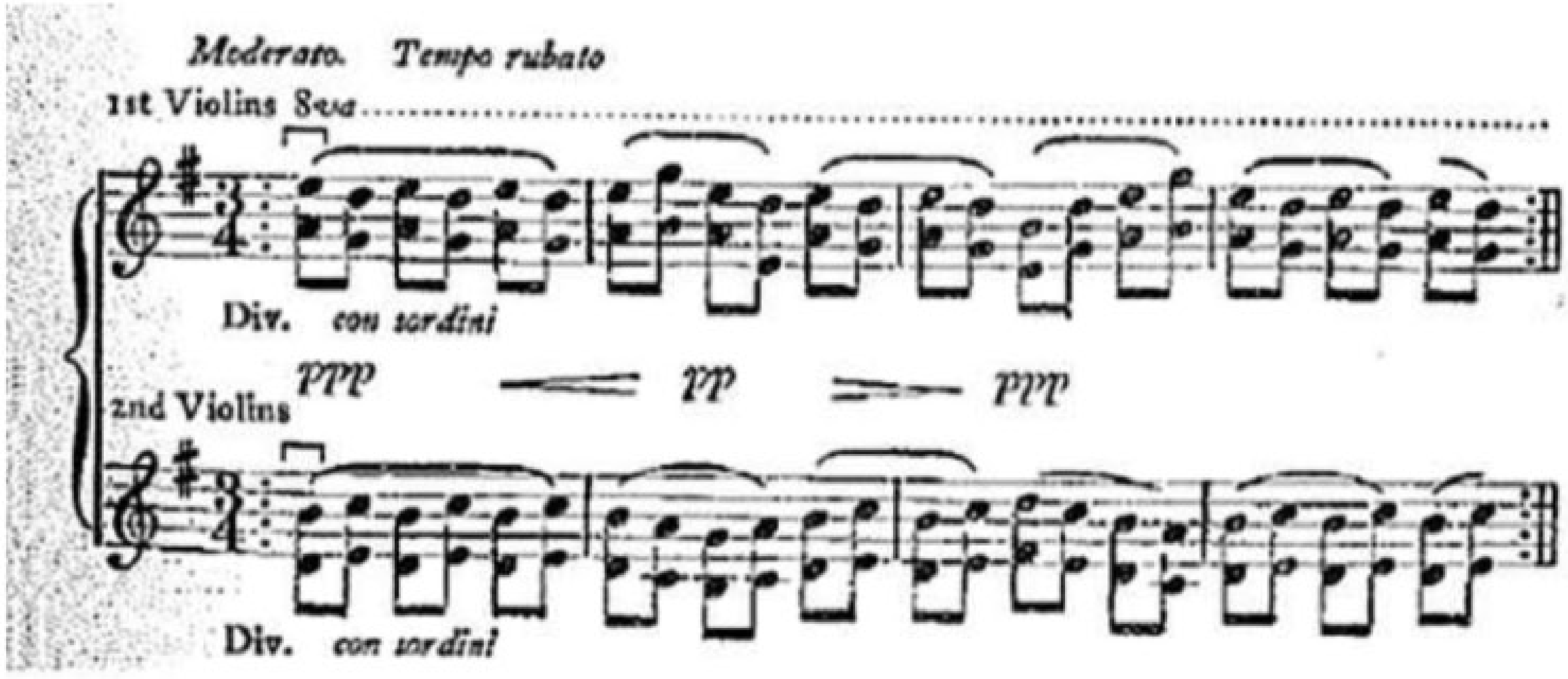
How does fairy music compare with the anomalous music of the deathbed visitation?

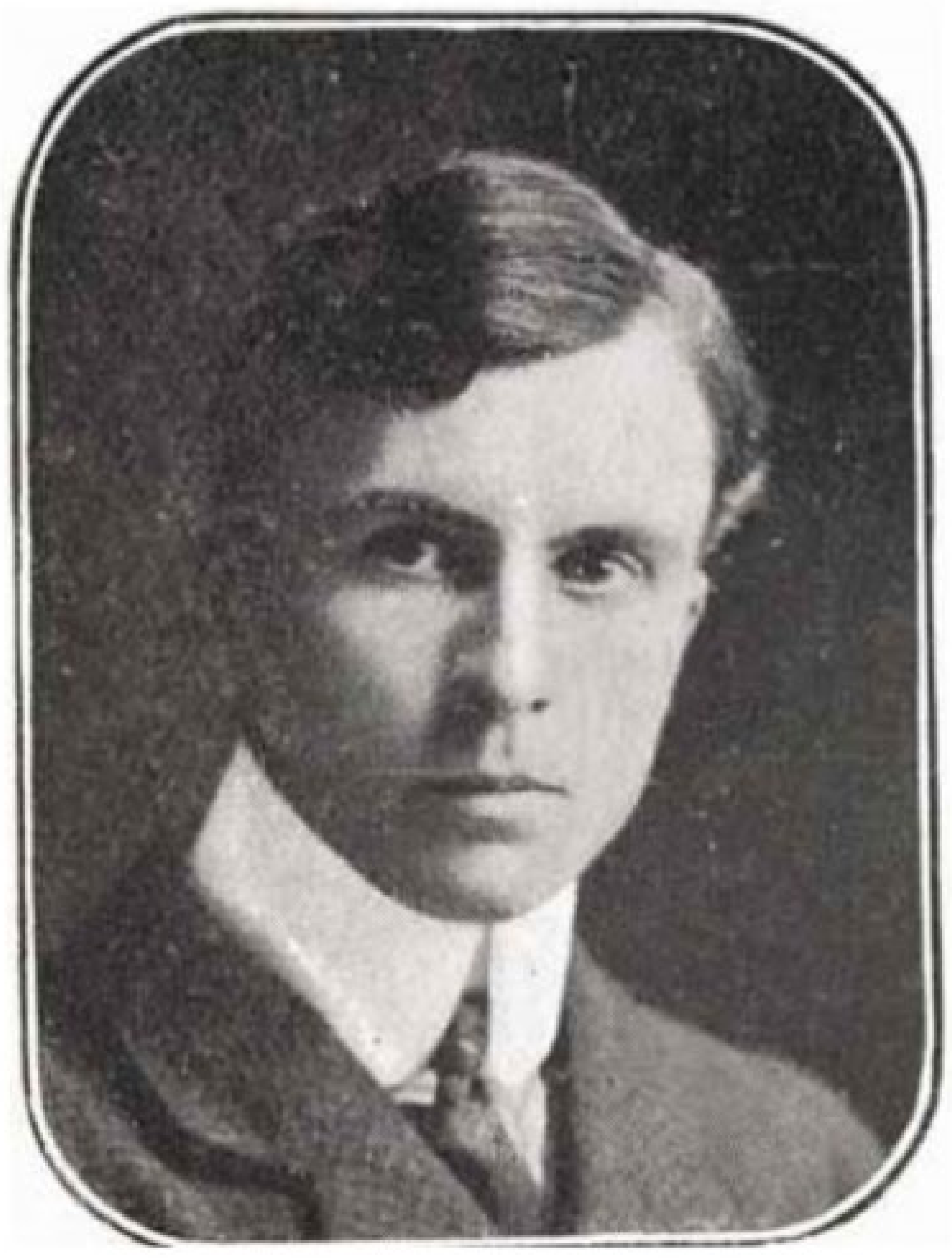
Mysterious music is often associated with death. Saints were frequently sung to their rest by angel choirs, and heavenly music was practically obligatory at Victorian deathbeds. This music sounded from above; it was high-pitched and wordless. It might be perceived only by the dying or also by their attendants. Earthly tunes are recognised only rarely and usually as a mundane hymn tune such as "Shall We Gather at the River."

This is a more typical experience:

[The dying boy] suddenly exclaimed "Oh, what a beautiful sight! See those little angels."

"What are they doing?" asked his sister.





NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

ABOVE: Composers Thomas Wood (left) and Norman O'Neill. **TOP:** Woods's notation of 'pixie music'.

"Oh, they have hold of hands, and wreaths on their heads, and they are dancing in a circle round me. Oh, how happy they look, and they are whispering to each other. One of them says, I have been a good little boy and they would like to have me come with them… they sing it beautifully. We can't sing so."[5]

For three days before the death of a child named Lilly Sewell, "sounds like the music of an Æolian harp" were heard, apparently from a cupboard in her room. The swelling effect was also noted: "The sounds increased until the room was full of melody, when it seemed slowly to pass down the stairs and ceased." Strangely, many family members and servants heard the music, but the dying girl did not.[6]

The Banshee, that shrieking messenger of the fairy tribe, might also sing a beautiful death-song.

"A Banshee was traditionally attached to the Baily family of Lough Gur; and one night at dead of night, when Miss Kitty Baily was dying of consumption, her two sisters, Miss Anne Baily and Miss Susan Baily, who were sitting in the death chamber, 'heard such sweet and melancholy music as they had never heard before. It seemed to them like distant cathedral music… The music was not in the house... It seemed to come through the windows of the old castle, high in the air.' But when Miss Anne, who went downstairs with a lighted candle to investigate the weird phenomenon, had approached the ruined castle she thought the music came from above the house…"[7]

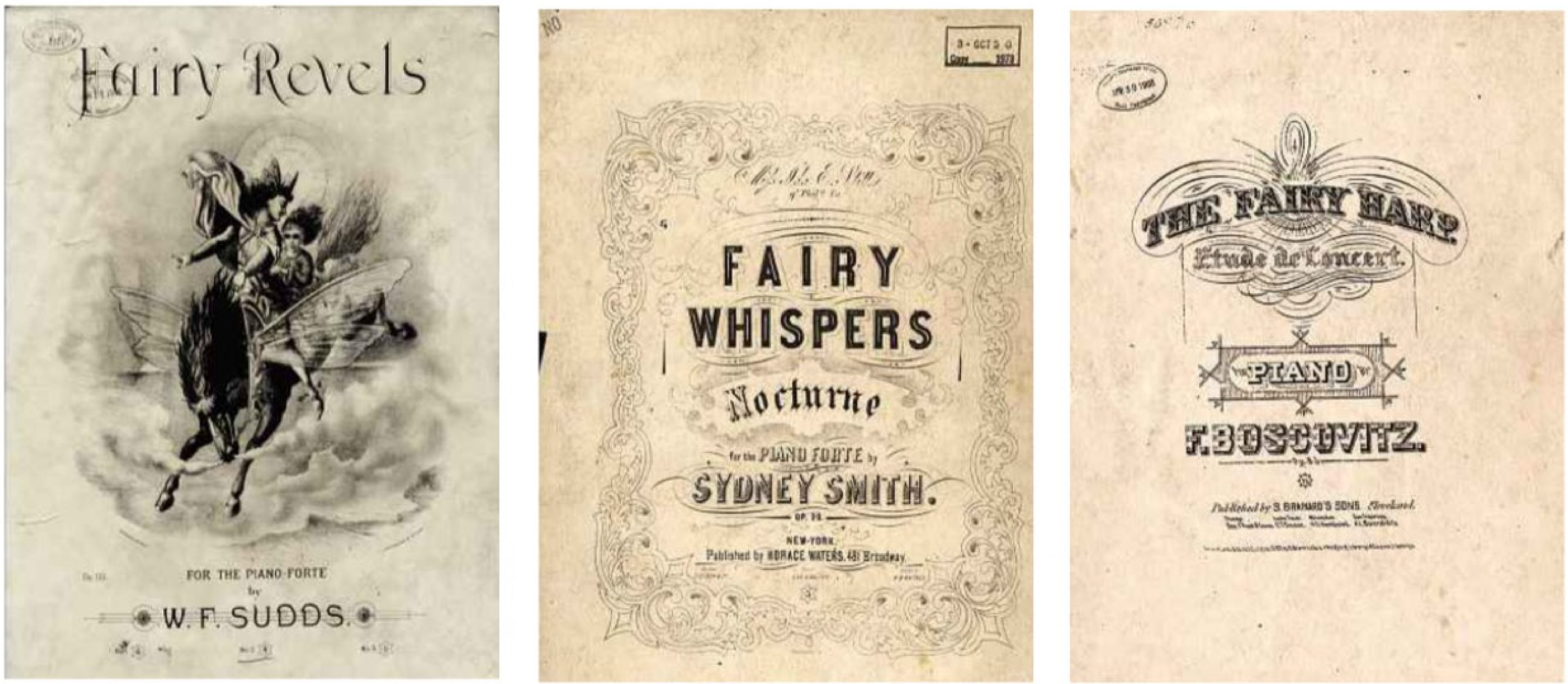
Context is everything. Similar sounds may be classed as fairy music, heavenly choirs at an edifying deathbed, or spirits singing from the Summerland. A Theosophist might have identified them as "the voice of creation at work among the primal simplicities," or called them "Deva Music," or "liquid sound." This begs the question: are these manifestations music from faerie or from the inner ear of the human brain?

FROM LURE TO LULLABY

What are some explanations of fairy music that do not involve actual fairies?

Musical Ear Syndrome (MES)[8]: This is the auditory equivalent of Charles Bonnet Syndrome (see p54), where persons see vivid visual hallucinations. In MES, persons who are either deaf or losing their hearing have aural hallucinations, often of music. High caffeine consumption can also cause auditory hallucinations and tinnitus, which may be mistaken for fairy music.

Animal noises: There are reports of heavenly music and banshee shrieks caused by snails crawling on glass. The "tiny hand-bells" heard in Miss Stella Watson's lakeside garden suggest tuneful amphibians. Miss Walpole's repetitive six-note strain also hints at the call of a wild creature. One wonders if an ornithologist or entomologist, given the location, time of day, and type of call, might be able to identify some of the makers of "fairy" music in these accounts.



ABOVE: 'Fairy music' – in the form of both songs and instrumental pieces for home performance – was a popular musical seb-genre duriing the 19th century..

Celtic piper Ronan Browne made a startling discovery about a Blasket Island fairy tune, "Port na bPúcaí". He wrote:

"It was said that islanders heard a mystical music and, thinking it was disquieted spirits, they made this air using the notes they heard in an attempt to placate the unhappy ghosts. Recent thinking suggests that they were, in fact, listening to whale-song reverberating through the canvas hulls of their boats. In the mid-1990s I went rooting through some cassettes of whale song and there in the middle of the Orca (Killer Whale) section I heard the opening notes of Port na bPúcaí!" [9]

Nature Sounds: The sliding of quartz scree sounded like bells. [10] Unearthly music heard in the Arctic was the result of wind gusting over holes in an iceberg like some icy ocarina. [11] Wind blowing through "The Piper's Stone(s)," a series of stone circles/megaliths was believed to be the song of fairy pipers. [12] Dr Alexander Forbes of the Harvard Medical School made the intriguing suggestion that the sounds of wind and water are broken by trees into acoustic fragments, which are then mistaken for fairy music. [13]

Miss Lorna Heath of Cornwall was walking on a windy day when she heard "the most wonderful music like wind-bells and organ-pipes combined, but on going to investigate she found that a new field opposite a builder's house had a fence with a top rail made of disused rain-water pipes!" [14]

ALL AGREE THAT FAIRY MUSIC IS OF A SUPERNATURAL BEAUTY

From the 1840s through the 1920s, a surfeit of fairies flitted through the performing arts. Fairy songs of the 1840s and 1850s, wittering about rills and babbling brooks, moved through the celesta of Tchaikovsky's Sugar Plum Fairy into fairy pantomimes and children's Christmas plays like *Bluebell in Fairyland* and JM Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Perhaps in the way that the visual imagery of Cecily Mary Barker's gauzy, winged Flower Fairies made its mark on the iconography of fairy sightings, the saccharine nature of fairy entertainments shaped the fairy music heard in the 20th century?

All hearers agree that fairy music is of a supernatural beauty, eclipsing any earthly music. Those ravished by these mysterious melodies were changed, as those who tasted the fruits of Fairyland were lost to the world of men. Yet within a few generations, Lady Wilde's description of fairy music as a "fatal charm for mortal ears" had mutated into "lovely sounds like a murmured cradle-song… gently singing an endless, ageless, melody," heard in a fairy wood in Cornwall in 1927. [15] The lure had become the lullaby. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

CHRIS WOODYARD is the author of numerous books, including *The Ghost Wore Black: Ghastly Tales from the Past* and *The Victorian Book of the Dead* and writes on international fortean topics at hauntedohiobooks.com.

NOTES

[1] Marjorie T Johnson, *Seeing Fairies: From the Lost Archives of the Fairy Investigation Society, Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times* (Anomalist Books, San Antonio, NM, 2014), p328

[2] Harold T Wilkins, "Pixie-Haunted Moor", *Fate Magazine* (July-August 1952), pp113-114.

[3] Johnson, *Seeing Fairies* pp330-331.

[4] Johnson, *Seeing Fairies* pp334-337.

[5] Gail Hamilton, *X Rays* (privately printed, Hamilton, MA, 1896), pp90-97.

[6] Edmund Gurney, et al.: *Phantasms of the Living Vol. II* (Kegan Paul, 1886), p221-223, quoted in D Scott Rogo, *NAD: A Study of Some Unusual "Other-world" Experiences* (University Books, New York, 1970), pp52-53.

[7] Charles Dickens, "Stories of Lough Guir", *All the Year Round* (23 April 1870), pp 496-497 (London, 1870). Quoted in Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, p81. www.fairyist.com/fairy-sightings/the-banshee-and-the-bailys/

[8] www.ata.org/sites/ata.org/files/images/Musical%20Ear%20Syndrome%20-%20Bauman%20-%20Spring%20'13.pdf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_ear_syndrome

[9] www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QskJoxYApo

[10] http://wp.me/p3gOGE-1AL

[11] http://wp.me/p3gOGE-1AL

[12] Rionach ui Ogain & Tom Sherlock, *The Otherworld: Music & Song from Irish Tradition* (Folklore of Ireland Council, 2012) p8-9.

[13] Dr Alexander Forbes: "'Analyzed Sound' In Nature", *Science* 4 July 1924, pp5-7.

[14] Johnson: *Seeing Fairies* p333.

[15] Johnson: *Seeing Fairies* p333.

FURTHER READING

www.fairyist.com

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Janet Bord, *Fairies: Real Encounters with Little People* (Dell, New York, 1997); *The Traveller's Guide to Fairy Sites* (Gothic Image Publications, Glastonbury, UK, 2004)

Jeremy Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions* (Heart of Albion Press, Marlborough, UK, 2004)

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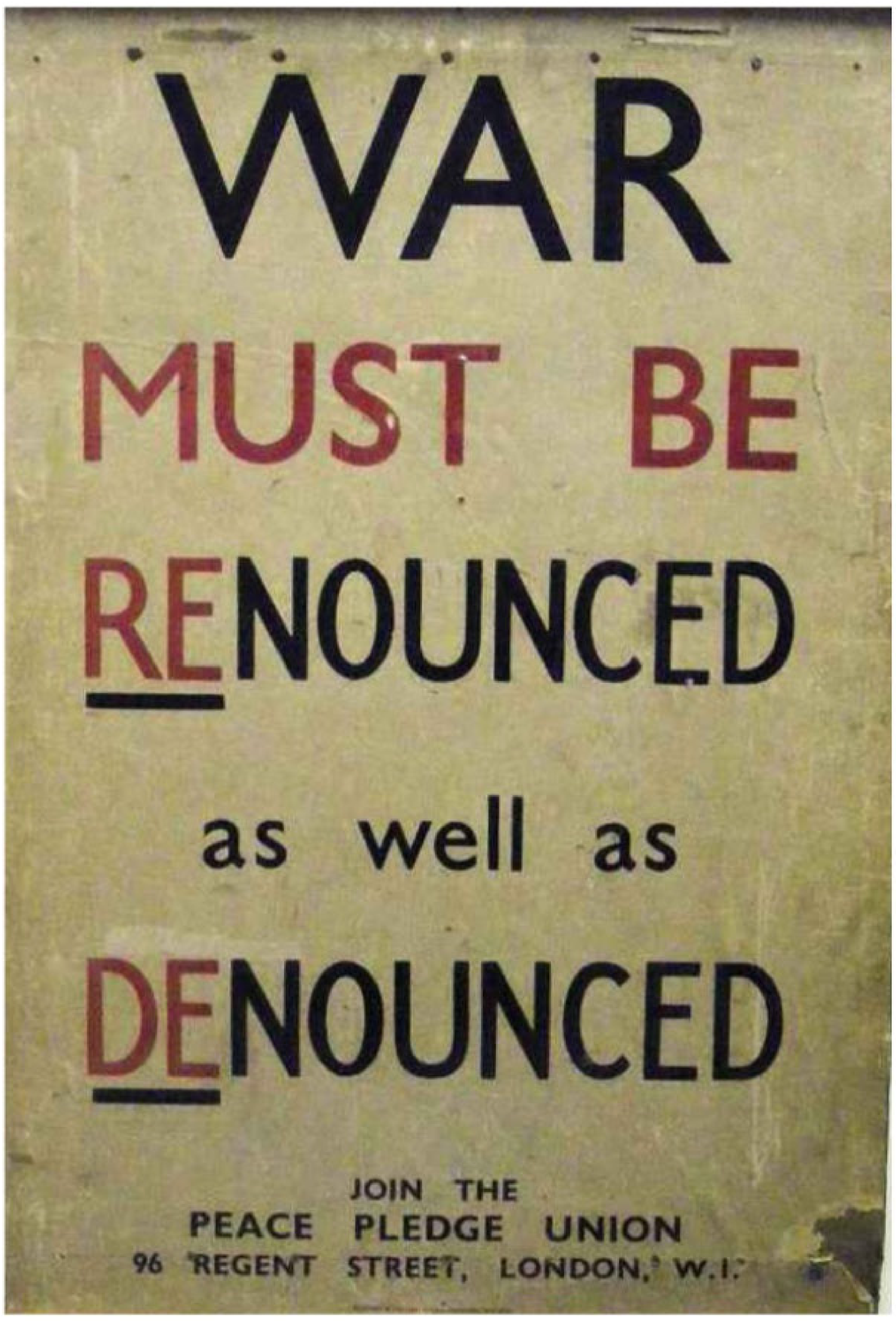
THE FIRST FORTEANS

10. *WARS, SCHISMS AND PEACE PLEDGES*

Who were the First Forteans? British fortean lineage began in the early 1930s, when Charles Fort was still alive and his books quite rare in these isles. **BOB RICKARD** continues his rummage for our fortean roots.

1937 was an extraordinary year for the British SF community, which included many fans and writers who became significant forteans in the ensuing years. Their very first convention was held that January, in Leeds,[1] during which the short-lived Science Fiction Association (SFA) was formed and Maurice Hanson's fanzine *Novae Terrae* was adopted as its house magazine. In November *Novae Terrae* took the unusual step of mailing leaflets about the Peace Pledge Union[2] with its 18th issue.[3]

It was also at that that convention that the host-group of Leeds fans openly split into opposing factions led by Doug Mayer (1919-1976) and Michael Rosenblum (?-1978). There is some evidence of a personality clash between them, but fan historian Rob Hansen has wondered whether this might have had a political dimension. In the early 1930s, socialists and pacifists had been united in their opposition to war; but with the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 and, more decisively, with the start of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, "that marriage came undone," notes Hansen. The pacifists maintained their opposition to all wars, while the socialists argued that all means must be used to reverse the spread of Fascism. "Where once there had been unity there was now antagonism, and it's not unreasonable to assume the pacifist Rosenblum and socialist Mayer mirrored this clash". By the end of June 1937 the schism was so serious both Mayer and Herbert Warnes (the SFA's first chairman) resigned their posts in the SFA, leaving Rosenblum and photographer Harold Gottliffe (1918-1998) to carry on.

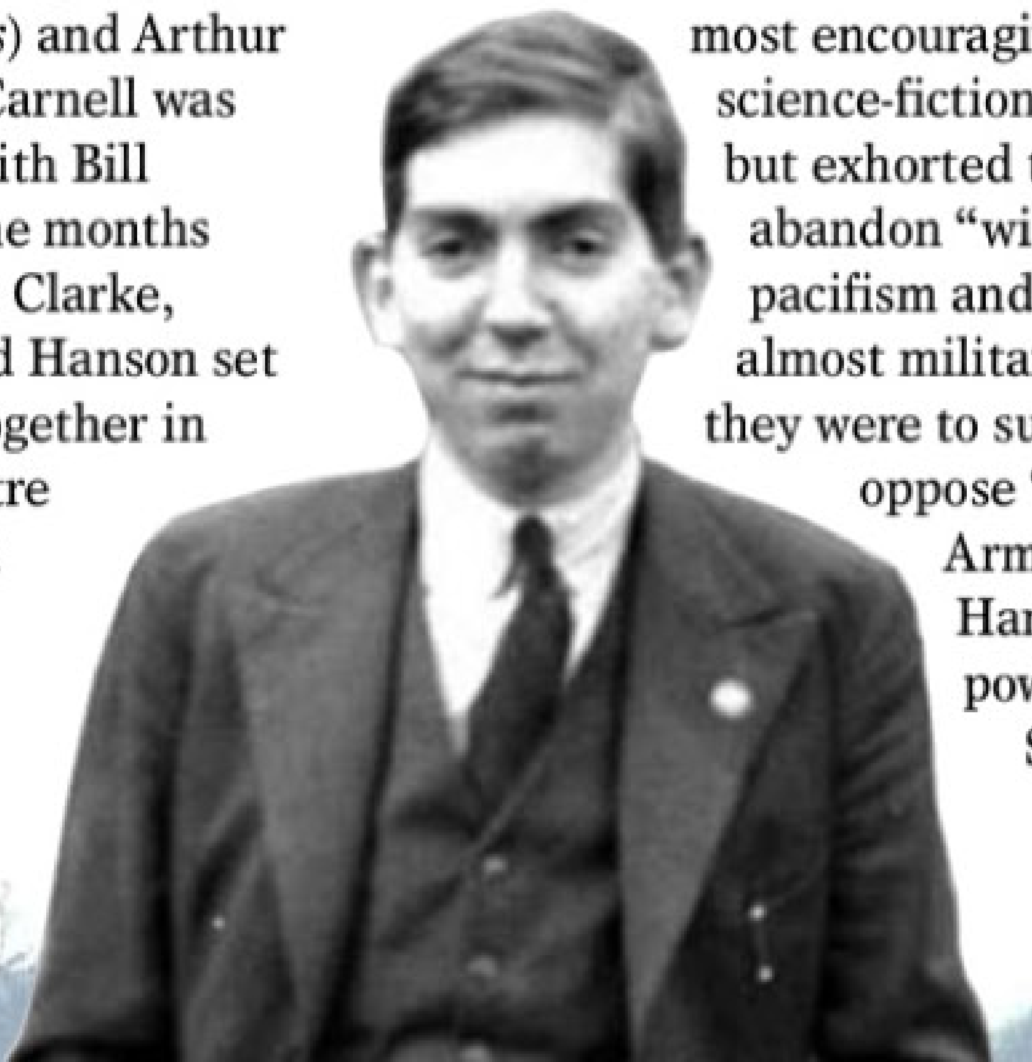


LEFT: A poster for the Peace Pledge Union. **BELOW:** Herbert Warnes, the SFA's first chairman (left) and Ted Carnell (right), who helped relaunch the SFA's magazine as *New Worlds*.

"WHERE ONCE THERE HAD BEEN UNITY THERE WAS NOW ANTAGONISM, AND WE CAN ASSUME THE PACIFIST ROSENBLUM AND SOCIALIST MAYER MIRRORED THIS CLASH"

The official start of World War II was two years in the future but, clearly, *Novae Terrae*'s editors were not unaffected by the escalating political tensions across Europe and Asia in this period. This awareness shows in the many articles in their fanzine speculating on the benefit of SF as a tool for exploring social issues; some, more ontologically, questioning the nature and future of man and society.

The editorial team behind this 18th issue now included Ted Carnell (who was later to re-invent the publication as *New Worlds*) and Arthur C Clarke. Carnell was replaced with Bill Temple nine months later, when Clarke, Temple and Hanson set up home together in the epicentre of SFA and British Interplanetary Society activities that was the famous Russell Square 'Flat' at 88 Gray's Inn Road.[4]



The Peace Pledge Union was a controversial pacifist movement founded by the Anglican priest Dick Sheppard (1880-1937),[5] famous at the time for being Britain's first 'radio parson'. He had campaigned against all forms of war-mongering, at home as well as in Europe, and asked those who felt the same to send him a postcard bearing the slogan: "We renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will we support or sanction another". As the campaign gathered momentum, it was joined by such celebrities as Siegfried Sassoon, Aldous Huxley, Bertrand Russell and the socialist politician George Lansbury.

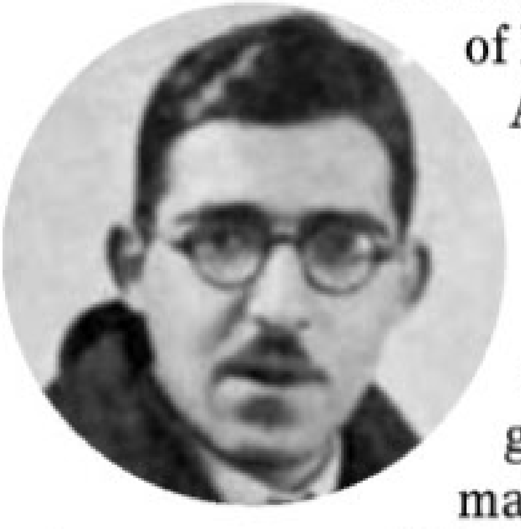
Sheppard's pacifist views were clearly supported by Hanson in particular, and underpinned in that issue by two articles aligning it with socialist ideals. In response, a young American fan called Donald A Wollheim (1914-1990) – who went on to become an influential writer, editor and publisher – noticed this latent politicising of British SF fans and was encouraged to write left-wing polemics with another active American fan, John Michel (1917-1968). Wollheim hailed this issue of *Novae Terrae* as "one of the most encouraging signs of science-fiction awakening," but exhorted them to abandon "wishy-washy" pacifism and unite "in almost military order" if they were to successfully oppose "the Strong Arm and the Iron Hand of those in power."[6]

Stirring

stuff! The debate of ‘Michelism’ – defined as “the belief that science-fiction followers should actively work for the realisation of the scientific socialist world-state as the only genuine justification for their activities and existence” [7] – led to a schism in Sam Moskowitz’s New York Science Fiction Club, to which Michel and Wollheim both belonged. Alongside such future famous writers as Fred Pohl, Robert Lowndes, Judith Merril (a committed Trotskyite at the time), Damon Knight, and Richard Wilson, Wollheim led the lefties into forming ‘The Futurians’; while those with centre and right leanings – including James Blish, a self-proclaimed fortean – were regrouped by Moskowitz as the ‘New Fandom’. Both factions engendered talented writers and became very influential. [8]

ABOVE: Dick Sheppard, founder of the Peace Pledge Union. **BELOW:** On different sides of the political divide were Doug Mayer (left) and Michael Rosenblum (right).

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES



Though largely forgotten now, the resulting uproar in US fandom, says historian Rob Hansen, was the moment that many of the Futurians “publically admitted their creed was essentially Communist”. In the UK, “with the exception of Dave McIlwain’s denunciation of Michelism in the first issue of *The Satellite* [later in 1937], the reaction was rather more muted”. The biggest difference, Hansen continues, was that “British fandom, on the whole, tended towards pacifism”, while “the Michelists had been getting interested in Marxism.” In fact, many UK fans preferred utopian socialism as expressed in HG Wells’s stories ‘When the Sleeper Wakes’ and ‘The Star-Begotten’.

In the last *Novae Terrae* of 1937, Doug Mayer approved of the Michelists and asked: “Why has it taken so long… for the fans to turn their attention… to the problems of humanity? The truth of the matter is that British fans are at last beginning to realise that science-fiction is something more than a mere type of literature.” [9] “However,” as Hansen comments, “whereas it had been possible to be both a committed socialist and a committed pacifist in the early 1930s, that wasn’t the case by the end of the decade; the British Left having abandoned pacifism *en masse* when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936”.

Conscription (National Service) was not implemented by the British government until April 1939; despite the campaign against it by Dick Sheppard’s PPU, many UK fans, like Maurice Hanson, accepted it philosophically. Hanson was among the first to enter the armed forces and was called up before war was declared.

However, continues Hansen, “when it came to the crunch few were able to act on their convictions… Among those who sought to become Conscientious Objectors were most of the major active British fans of the day, such as Douglas Webster, John F Burke, Dave McIlwain (who wrote as Charles Eric Maine), Walter Gillings, George Medhurst, and Ron Holmes (who was assigned to a Pacifist Service Unit in Liverpool). CS Youd (who wrote as John Christopher) was initially a pacifist but soon changed his mind, going on to argue against it with people such as Burke.”

Among the ‘conchies’ was Mike Rosenblum, who endured frightening interrogations as he sought exemption, only to be assigned farm work near his home in Leeds. Despite these difficulties Rosenblum is credited with almost single-handedly keeping British fandom alive during the war years by consolidating smaller fanzines and newsletters into single mailings under the title *Futurian War Digest* (fondly known as *FIDO*).

Rosenblum’s *FIDO* [10] – much like Hal Chibbett’s *Newsletter* – also circulated news amongst friends about who had been called up, wartime postings and, inevitably, injuries or worse. In the packet for November 1940, Medhurst reports that “the Blitz has effectively put an end to fanactivity in London.” This was confirmed by Sid Birchby who was concerned that the bombing of their old haunts had left London SFA members without a venue for meetings. He arranged a few meetings at the headquarters of Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophical Society at the northern end of Baker Street. He later recalled: “It ran a very good cafe and lounge mainly for the troops, of which I was one. The food was really good and plentiful, grown on what we would now call whole-food principles. Frank Arnold’s flat was close to Baker Street and my army base when in London was at Marylebone Road, so I arranged for ad-hoc fan-meetings at Steiner Hall. When I left London, they ceased.”

Formal gatherings of SF fans did not resume until after war ended in September 1945.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – For their generous help, my thanks go to the SF fan historians and archivists who went out of their way to preserve the correspondence, images, fanzines and reports of the day. Chief among those are Rob Hansen’s **FIAWOL** archive - http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/ ; David Langford for his **Ansible** archive - http://news.ansible.co.uk/ ; Greg Pickersgill for his **Gostak** archive - http://www.gostak.demon.co.uk/ ; Peter Weston for permission to use images from Mike Rosenblum in his collection, and for his *Relapse* - http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/; Philip Turner for permission to use images from Harry Turner’s **Footnotes to Fandom** archive - http://www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes.htm; and Jill Godfrey for permission to use Harold Gottliffe’s photos from the above sites.

NOTES

1 See FF1 ‘The light of other days’, **FT308:38-39**.

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_Pledge_Union

3 *Novae Terrae*, Vol 2 No 18 (November 1937). This issue also records that Harold Chibbett had just joined the SFA. www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/then/archive/NewWorlds/NT18.htm

4 See FF9 ‘The pubs at the end of the Universe’ in **FT320:48-50.**

5 In WWI, Sheppard served as chaplain to a military hospital in France from which he was sent home with “exhaustion”, becoming the vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, adjacent to Trafalgar Square, and in 1929, Dean of Canterbury. He was buried in Canterbury Cathedral. Sheppard founded the PPU in 1934. He campaigned relentlessly against political and military aggression as solutions to social conflicts and had grand ideas of raising a ‘Peace Army’ in 1938 to stand between the Chinese and Japanese in Shanghai. PPU support of ‘appeasement’ led to them being accused of being apologists for the Nazis and attracted MI5 investigation. Among their strongest critics was George Orwell. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Sheppard_(priest)

6 Doland Wollheim, letter, ‘Commentary on the November “Novae Terrae”’, http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THEN/Archive/NewWorlds/NT20.htm

7 ‘Michelism’ in *Fancyclopedia 3*. http://fancyclopedia.org/michelism

8 There is considerable literature on the rise of socialism among the literary radicals of America coming out of the Great Depression. See ‘Marxism and Science Fiction’ by Louis Proyect (http://lists.csbs.utah.edu/pipermail/marxism/2000-July/040499.html) in which he points out that almost all the Futurians “participated in Young Communist League activities” except Damon Knight, a few non-Communists, and possibly Isaac Asimov who “came at a young age from the Soviet Union”. This is a fascinating period in the history of SF and forteanism in the USA, which I must leave to someone better versed in the material than me.

9 Douglas Mayer, ‘Wake Up Fans’, *Novae Terrae*, Dec 1937, http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/then/archive/NewWorlds/NT19.htm

10 A full archive of Rosenblum’s *Futurian War Digest* can be found at http://efanzines.com/FWD/FWD.htm

MEN WITH
SED FACES
TOUR
AQUA VELVAS
WWW.AQUAVELVAS.CO.UK
VOICE OF THE LEFT

AQUA VELVAS

ON ITUNES

DAVID CAMERON'S GOVERNMENT

PAEDOPHILES IN OUR SCHOOLS
NATIONAL HEALTH OVERDOSED BY RULES
"Skunk on offer with the girl next door"

BUY IT NOW IF YOU HAVE A CONSCIENCE

The return of the BSWs

EMMA McNEILL asks if anxiety about pædophilia and failures in the UK's social services have helped resurrect a bogeyman (or woman) of the 1990s.

EMMA MCNEILL is a freelance writer with a lifelong passion for forteana who can't believe she actually gets to write about weird stuff. She lives in County Down, Northern Ireland.

In the 1980s and 1990s, families in the UK – and to a lesser extent the US – faced an unusual threat: the Bogus Social Worker (BSW).[1] By the late Nineties, though, these strange visitors were becoming less common. A 1995 police investigation into the phenomenon concluded that there had been only a handful of genuine cases and that the majority of reports were the result of misunderstandings and a subsequent panic or mania.[2]

Today, BSWs are apparently on the rise again.[3] Although many still identify themselves as social workers, they're now claiming to be health visitors too. I became aware of this variation when a friend announced on Facebook that her own health visitor had warned her about a Bogus Health Visitor (BHV) in Cardiff.

The basics of an encounter today remain the same as in the Nineties heyday of the BSW. An unrecognised person calls on a family and says they he or she is from an official child welfare service and claims to be looking for signs of abuse or neglect. The caller is normally a woman, sometimes working with a "colleague". She may have an odd appearance, such as wearing a wig or unusual clothing. There is an examination of the child or children and in some cases an attempt to take the child away. After the visit, the parent realises they have been duped and that the authorities have no record of the caller. After an initial isolated case there may be a wave of similar reports. A couple of weeks later, cases dry up.

LEFT AND BELOW: Police released E-fit images of Bogus Social Workers reported from Quedgeley, Gloucestershire and Beverley, East Yorkshire.

Over the years a number of explanations have been put forward for the phenomenon. One possibility is that no one has *ever* been visited by a BSW. South Yorkshire's Operation Childcare, which investigated reports of BSWs, found that salesmen, canvassers, researchers and even genuine social workers had been misidentified.

A few researchers have concluded that BSWs don't exist in concrete reality at all and are folkloric figures, like phantom clowns and the Men In Black. Some, like Patrick Harpur, have suggested that the BSWs are actually dæmons or tricksters.

The possibility of factitious reports is also worth examining. Some parents may be lying about these visits. This could be as a form of attention-seeking – perhaps similar to Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy.[4] Or, as in one horrific case where a woman murdered her foster child, to conceal actual abuse.[5]

But what if unidentified individuals really *are* visiting families and pretending to be from the authorities? Who could they be? Thrill-seekers who enjoy the power trip? Pædophiles trying to gain access to children? Or, perhaps more plausibly, are they self-appointed child-protectors or vigilantes who believe that by visiting these families they will prevent abuse that would otherwise be overlooked by the authorities.

When BSWs first emerged, the extent of child abuse in society was gradually being recognised; but, at the same time, moral panics about such abuse were also leading to false allegations against parents, as in the Satanic Ritual Abuse scandal of the time (see **FT57:46-62**). This, in turn, led to a mistrust of social workers, who had both ignored genuine cases and accused parents wrongfully. Perhaps this might have led some people to believe they had a duty to take matters into their own hands.

Similar circumstances might explain why BSWs are on the rise again. There have been a number of high profile failures of social services – most prominently, that in Rotherham – and a growing awareness of pædophilia, including new threats posed by the Internet. People are also discovering that well-known celebrities from their childhoods were sexual predators hiding in plain sight. As in the Nineties, society is alert to both the possibility of child abuse and the inefficacy of authorities in dealing with it.

The increase in people turning up on doorsteps claiming to be health visitors can be explained simply: the expansion of the health visitor system has made them a familiar feature of family life. Why would a parent doubt that the person on the doorstep is the real thing? Parenting forums are full of people wondering if they can refuse to see the health visitor and being warned that this will bring up child welfare red flags. I can see why parents would feel obliged to let anyone claiming to be a health visitor into their home.

While most reports may be misunderstandings, the ones that aren't are worrying. Isn't being concerned about BSWs and BHVs a good thing? We can be alert without descending into hysteria. And even if they *are* just modern bogeymen, as forteans we know that just because something is an urban legend doesn't mean it can't happen. Just ask anyone who bought a poodle at an Argentinean market.[5] FT

NOTES

[1] I use the word "bogus", used by authorities and many researchers. "Phantom" is also used, but puts the phenomena in the realm of folklore excluding more concrete explanations.

[2] www.independent.co.uk/news/huge-sums-wasted-on-bogus-social-worker-hunt-1596552.html

[3] Recent cases in the press include examples from Beverley, Yorkshire (Oct 2013), Quedgeley, Gloucestershire (Apr 2014) and Newtownards, Co. Down (Oct 2014).

[4] www.heraldscotland.com/sport/spl/aberdeen/inquiry-on-bogus-social-worker-closed-as-report-prepared-for-fiscal-mother-denies-inventing-baby-snatch-story-1.681089

[5] www.sptimes.com/2005/04/08/State/Suspect_admitted_kill.shtml

[6] www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2305310/Man-gets-shock-toy-poodles-turn-GIANT-RODENTS-steroids.html

For reports of Bogus Social Workers since 1990, see **FT57:43-45, 61:36, 66:48-49, 77:36-38, 87:18, 98:14-15, 270:10-11, 273:11, 281:11, 315:24.**

Cattle in the living room...

Could a bizarre medical condition account for a range of fortean experiences? **MARK GREENER** explores the weird visual world of Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

MARK GREENER is a medical writer and also also clinical editor and columnist for *Pharmacy Magazine* and writes regularly for a wide variety of magazines.

Most evenings for six months, the 69-year-old man had seen visions: faces, strange shapes, animals – including a spider, which he tried to kill – and friends and acquaintances sitting in his armchair. But there was no spider, no friends, no one else in the room. A girl appeared from nowhere and passed through closed doors in front of a 73-year-old woman. While sitting in his living room, an 87-year-old saw swarms of flies, darting blue fish, bears and Highland Cattle that "used to stare at him while quietly munching away at the grass".

These were, of course, hallucinations. But these people weren't mad or high, and they usually knew the visions weren't real. They suffered from Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS), an enigmatic, fascinating and ambiguous disease that might help explain visions, folkloric creatures, doppelgängers and other fortean favourites.

Once regarded as extremely rare, we now know that CBS is relatively common, at least among people who are losing their sight or are blind. Indeed, up to 40 per cent of people with impaired vision develop CBS. Yet misdiagnosis – especially mistaking CBS for diseases such as schizophrenia or dementia – is surprisingly common. Indeed, doctors almost confined some people with CBS to mental hospitals. Not surprisingly, patients are often unwilling to admit that they suffer hallucinations. In one study, 36 per cent of CBS patients kept their experiences to themselves. Other estimates suggest that up to 60 per cent of CBS patients are reluctant to tell a doctor.

The condition is named after Charles Bonnet (1720–1793), a Swiss naturalist and philosopher. Bonnet described the vivid hallucinations experienced by his 87-year-old grandfather, Charles Lullin, whose cataracts eventually left him almost blind. As his eyesight worsened, Lullin saw numerous visions. Once, for example, Lullin saw two young men in "magnificent" red and grey cloaks, with hats trimmed in silver. Another time, he saw two portly women who were so tall they almost touched the ceiling. On both occasions, Lullin's servant swore no one else was in the room. Bonnet insightfully linked the hallucinations to visual loss and recognised that his grandfather was still thinking clearly. Indeed, Lullin remained lucid until he died.

The vivid visions arising from CBS might help explain several strange phenomena. For example, about a quarter of people with CBS seem to experience text hallucinations. One man saw Hebrew letters over the walls for about six weeks after Yom Kippur each year. Other people see words from no known language. Sometimes, they're "letter-like runes" rather than normal script.

He saw swarms of flies, blue fish, bears and Highland cattle

I wonder if some magical languages, signs and sigils could derive from a similar source experienced by people in a less 'rationalist' age. After all, after the psychedelic revolution and advances in psychiatry and neurology, hallucinations are almost commonplace and viewed merely as 'aberrant' brain activity. But to our ancestors, the same visions were often seen as gifts from gods, angels or demons. (Some religious CBS people still regard the visions in the same way.) Even today, some people, especially lonely elderly people, draw comfort from the visions and inspirations. And perhaps some of the association between witchcraft and old people comes from the visions linked to impaired vision – which become more common as you get older.

CBS can also cause images that the patient could take for folkloric creatures, especially in societies that take the objective reality of other realms seriously. One woman saw an image of a teenage boy on her car bonnet, leaning on his arms with his feet in the air. When the car stopped, he rose into the air. On another occasion, the same woman saw "hideous", motionless, "witch-like" figures, complete with "huge hooked noses, protruding chins, and glaring eyes". Another person with CBS saw figures a few inches tall that looked like "elves or fairies, with little green caps". They proceeded to climb her wheelchair.

Magical, mystical landscapes are also common CBS visions. Lullin reported that buildings and landscapes would spontaneously appear and disappear.

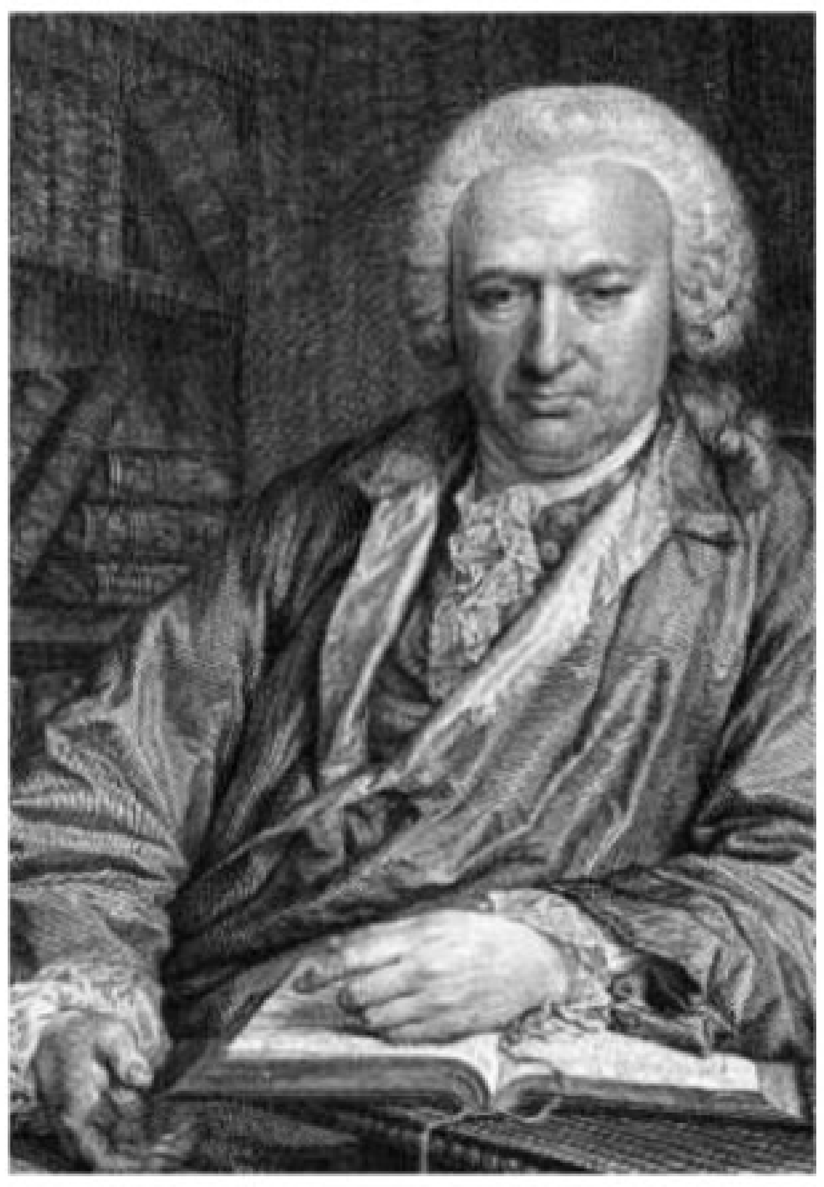
The size of such images size could increase or decrease – one carriage grew until it reached the eaves of the house, which was about 30ft (9m) above the ground. Birds, carriages and people who were engaged in conversation remained silent, which must have given the vision an unworldly atmosphere. More recently, a CBS patient reported seeing mediæval landscapes. Modern architecture can transform into older buildings. It's easy to see how such hallucinations could give credence to fairy and other realms, especially in the past when the natural and supernatural, the mundane and the magical were not as differentiated as today.

People with CBS also frequently report doppelgängers. Again, Lullin got there first. One morning, Lullin saw a man leaning casually on the window frame. He was a head taller than Lullin, but otherwise identical to him. Like Lullin, the doppelgänger was smoking a pipe, and wore the same cap and dressing gown. The doppelgänger reappeared the following morning and soon became familiar. The images of other people began on 10 August 1759 and lasted unit September. The doppelgänger remained well into October.

So, where do these visions come from? The explanations for CBS are, Professor Douwe Draaisma comments, "almost as varied as the images themselves". One theory suggested that the subconscious creates a substitute world full of entertaining scenes to compensate for the visual loss. Some people enjoy the visions – but the hallucinations leave other people profoundly distressed.

Another theory suggests the hallucinations are the mental equivalent of a phantom limb. Almost everyone who loses a limb experiences the 'phantom' of the missing area. Similarly, between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of people who lose their vision or hearing experience visual or auditory hallucinations. In part, these may arise because the brain 'expects' considerable input from our senses generally and our eyes in particular. The lack of stimuli to the brain may cause a "phenomenon similar to phantom limb symptoms". However, Draaisma points out, the images often appear when vision begins to decline and then disappear once blindness develops. Yet according to this theory, the visions "should then be at their clearest," he notes.

Sensory deprivation offers another possible explanation. Indeed, CBS hallucinations sometimes develop when sufferers shut their eyes. Several investigations show that healthy people experience hallucinations when temporarily deprived of their senses. In one study, for example, 10 of 13 normally sighted patients reported hallucinations while being blindfolded for five days. (I wonder if visions induced by sensory deprivation formed part of the appeal for hermits and other mystics seeking solitude.) However, Draaisma criticises this proposal on similar grounds to the 'phantom limb' theory: the images often disappear when blindness occurs. So, sensory deprivation *per se* is unlikely to offer a full explanation.



ABOVE: Charles Bonnet, naturalist and philosopher.

Another theory proposes that the hallucinations arise from the brain's attempts to fill in gaps in perception. In fact, you're hallucinating now without realising it. The optic nerve carries signals from the light sensitive retina at the back of the eye to the brain. But, as its name suggests, the blind spot doesn't capture an image. So, in healthy people, the brain fills in gaps in perception, such as the space left by the blind spot, with, effectively, hallucinations. The visual hallucinations in CBS could arise as the brain's attempt to generate consistency when the visual input declines or is inconsistent.

For example, Lullin saw "a swarm of specks" that became pigeons or butterflies, and a blue haze with yellow dots that turned into a handkerchief. The brain 'knows' that floating specks and blue hazes with yellow dots don't float across the study of an elderly man in Switzerland. So, the brain fills in the gap with pigeons and handkerchiefs. But while this probably explains some CBS hallucinations, Draaisma suggests that most images are "too rich" to be a "cerebral elaboration of elementary optical stimuli".

Yet another theory, first published in 1962, proposes a dysfunction in the brain's censors: failing eyesight reduces the perception of reality, which makes room for the products of the imagination. A more recent version suggests that the brain has a "censorship mechanism" that continually removes irrelevant impulses from conscious perception. However, this depends on a normal supply of inputs from our senses. If the input falls below a certain threshold, the brain allows subconscious perceptions to surface, producing visual hallucinations.

As always, this proliferation of theories means that we still don't know why or how vivid visions emerge in people with CBS. Perhaps there isn't a single explanation: the cause may vary from person to person and over time in the same individual. Indeed, some 250 years after Lullin first reported his visions, we know remarkably little about this enigmatic disease. As Draaisma notes, the term CBS hides "a world of… confusion and conflict, as well as curiosity and astonishment". CBS will continue to provoke conflict, curiosity and astonishment for many years to come. FT

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Mark Greener's *The Stroke Survival Guide* (Sheldon Press) will be published in January 2015.

Raising a false flag

Accusations of ‘false flag’ operations have been common currency in conspiracy theory circles in recent years, from 9/11 to the Boston bombings. As **ANDREW MAY** points out, though, real examples of such operations have been around for a long time…

ANDREW MAY is a former scientist and regular FT contributor with a lifelong interest in pulp fiction and weird stuff. He blogs at forteana-blog.blogspot.co.uk/

Conspiracy theorists often talk about false flag operations. Or to put it another way, people who talk about false flag operations are often conspiracy theorists. To the man in the street, on the other hand, it may seem absurd to imagine that a government would mount an operation against its own people under the guise of an attack by another country or ethnic minority. Yet in this instance the conspiracy theorists are right, at least as far as the basic principle is concerned. False flag incidents really do occur – history is full of them.

Several wars have begun with false flag operations. It’s a familiar situation: powerful country A is keen to start a war with weaker country B, but doesn’t want to be seen as the aggressor. So they fabricate an attack against themselves and blame it on the other side. The Vietnam War – America’s involvement in it, at least – began with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed by Congress on 7 August 1964. This was a response to two incidents that purportedly took place in the Gulf of Tonkin a few days earlier, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats launched unprovoked attacks against US Navy ships. Virtually all historians now agree that the second of these attacks never took place at all, while the first attack was deliberately provoked by the Americans, who fired the first shots. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was predicated on a lie… but it was enough to propel the United States into one of the longest and bloodiest wars in its history.

The biggest conflict of all, the Second World War, began with Nazi Germany’s declaration of war against Poland on 1 September 1939. Ostensibly, this was an act of self-defence. In his speech to the Reichstag, Hitler said: “I am wrongly judged if my love of peace and my patience are mistaken for weakness or even cowardice. I therefore decided last night and informed the British Government that in these circumstances I can no longer find any willingness on the part of the Polish Government to conduct serious negotiations with us. These proposals for mediation have failed because there came as an answer the sudden Polish general mobilisation, followed by more Polish atrocities. These were again repeated last night. Recently in one night there were as many as 21 frontier incidents: last night there were 14, of which three were quite serious. I have, therefore, resolved to speak to Poland in the same language that Poland for months past has used toward us.”

ABOVE: President Johnson signs the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, helping propel the US into the Vietnam conflict.

OPPOSITE TOP: Supposed Catholic conspirator Guy Fawkes creeps into a cellar beneath the Houses of Parliament.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: “A Thankful Remembrance of Gods Mercie – Babington with his complices in St Giles field”, published in 1630.

The King believed Tonge to be a madman and Oates a liar

What were the “Polish atrocities” and “frontier incidents” Hitler was referring to? On the face of it, they were carried out by Polish troops against German military installations near the border between the two countries. In reality, all the attacks were carried out by German soldiers wearing Polish uniforms. Hitler had authorised the operation himself.

In the context of present-day conspiracy theory, false flag operations are usually portrayed as the work of Western governments, which place the blame on Islamic extremists. Religious paranoia is nothing new, though, even if the specific target has changed. Back in the 16th and 17th centuries, Europe was torn in two by the rift between Catholics and Protestants. England was a Protestant country, and the Civil War in the middle of the 17th century saw the rise of a strongly anti-Catholic movement in the form of Puritanism. After the restoration of Charles II in 1660, there was a shift towards religious tolerance among the higher levels of the establishment. The King himself was married to a Catholic, Catherine of Braganza, while his brother – the future James II – was also a Catholic.

Further down the chain, Puritanical intolerance and anti-Catholic sentiment were still the order of the day. Many people felt the King was too soft on Catholics, who ought to be expelled from the country altogether. One such extremist was a paranoid individual named Israel Tonge, who had been rector of a church that was burnt down during the Great Fire of London in 1666. Tonge openly blamed Catholic priests for starting the fire.

In 1678, Tonge teamed up with an unlikely ally – a young man named Titus Oates who had been expelled from a Catholic college in France. Though his reasons were quite different, Oates hated the Catholics almost as much as Tonge did. Between them, they hatched a plot – a kind of private enterprise false flag operation – that they hoped would persuade the King to outlaw Catholicism once and for all.

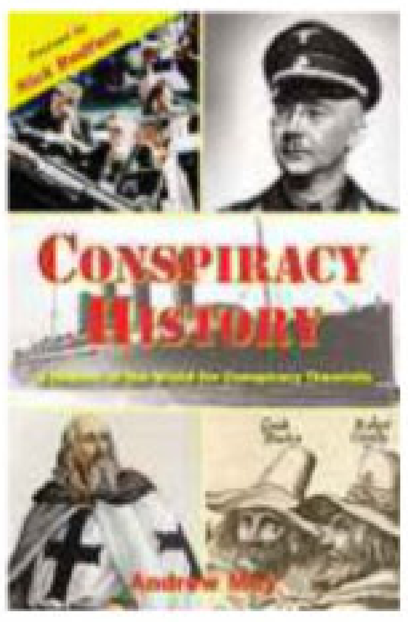
The essence of the Popish Plot, as it became known, was that a group of powerful Catholics –including the Queen’s personal physician and possibly even the Queen herself – were conspiring to assassinate the King. Over the course of weeks extensive evidence came to light – all of it fabricated by Oates, Tonge and various members of the criminal underworld they persuaded to join them.

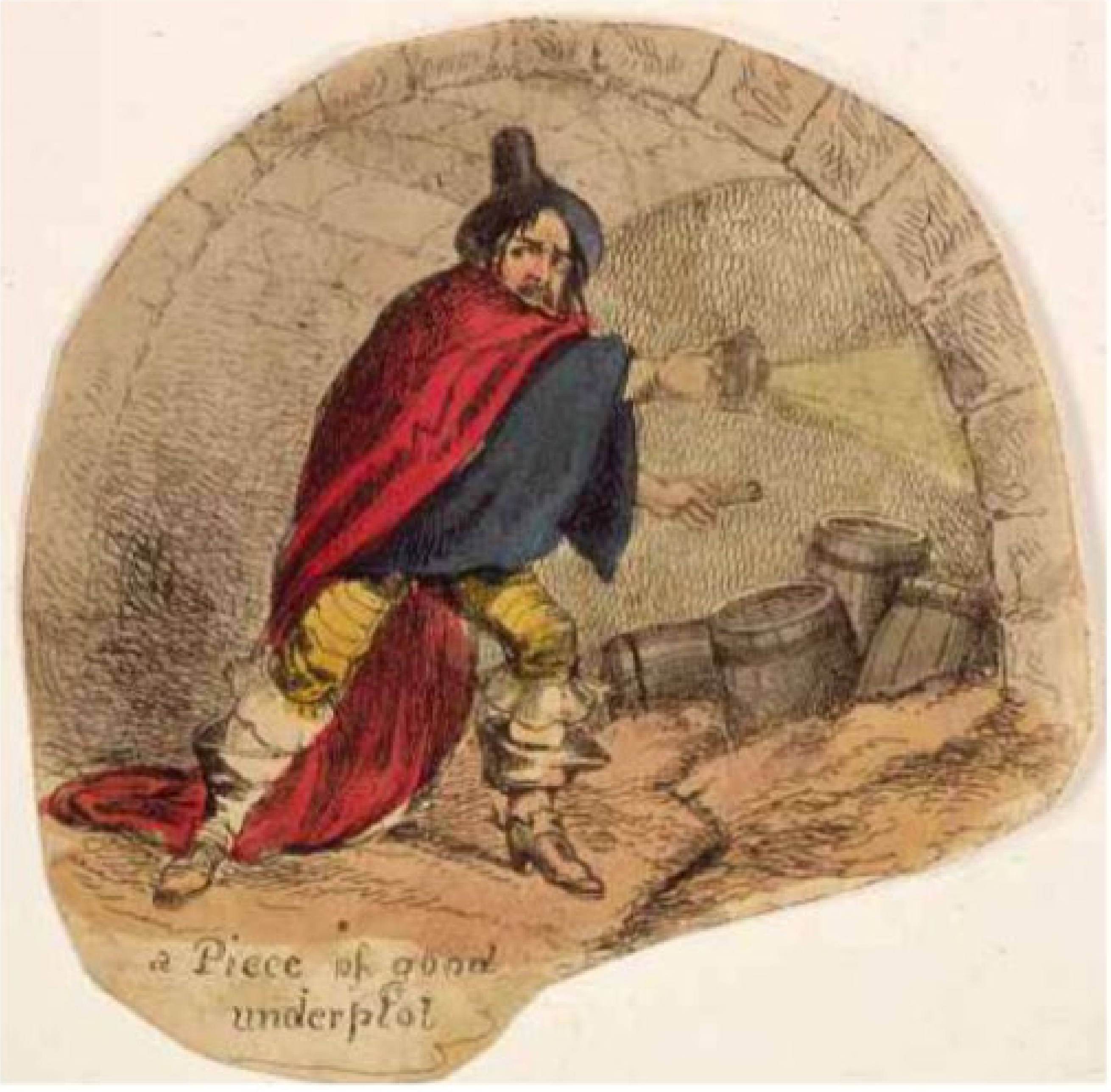
To give greater credence to their allegations, Oates and Tonge agreed to swear an oath before a magistrate. The magistrate in question was named Edmund Berry Godfrey, and on 28 September 1678 he duly took their depositions. Less than three weeks later, Godfrey was found face down in a ditch on Primrose Hill. He had been strangled, his neck was broken, and he had been run through with his own sword. Three Catholic priests were executed for the murder, but – apart from the fact they were Catholics – there was no material evidence against them. It seems far more likely the murder was the work of Oates and Tonge themselves – either as a random killing to frame the Catholics, or because Godfrey was on the point of exposing their fraudulent activities.

To his credit, the King never really believed in the Popish Plot – he considered Tonge to be a madman and Oates a liar. Most people disagreed with him, however, and a period of anti-Catholic hysteria followed. No fewer than 24 Catholics were falsely accused of treason and executed between December 1678 and July 1681. Israel Tonge and Titus Oates became national heroes, and were granted state apartments in Whitehall together with generous salaries. It all came to an abrupt end in September 1681, however. By this time Tonge had died a natural death, while Oates was becoming increasingly outrageous in his accusations – even hinting that the King himself was part of the plot to kill the King. Oates was charged with sedition and thrown into jail – a relatively lenient punishment for someone with so much blood on his hands.

When the news broke that the Popish Plot had been a hoax, people started to look back at that more famous Catholic conspiracy – the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 – with newly cynical eyes. The similarities are obvious: both plots involved supposed attempts by Catholics to assassinate a Protestant monarch, and both resulted in worse, rather than better, conditions for Catholics. But is it really credible to suggest that the Gunpowder Plot was a false flag operation? Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators really were Catholics, and they really did want to blow up Parliament. But who gave them the idea?

Conspiracy History **by Andrew May is published by Bretwalda Books, priced £8.99 and is available in paperback and kindle from Amazon.**

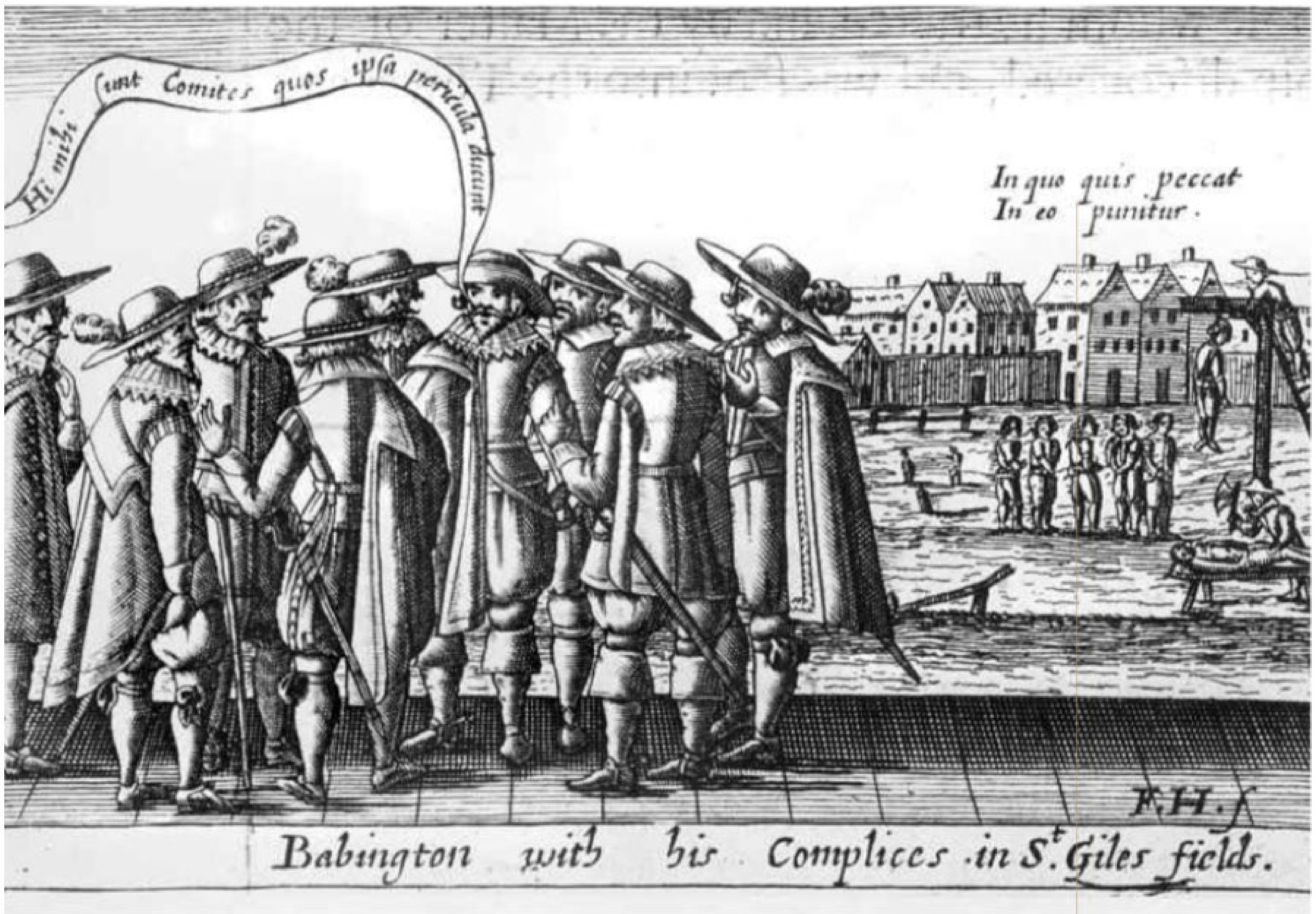



a Piece of good underplot

Conspiracy theorists often target Lord Salisbury, whose public role in the Gunpowder Plot was much the same as that of Titus Oates in the Popish Plot 75 years later. Salisbury was the one who exposed the alleged conspiracy to the world, and he was the one who went on to foil it. Does this mean that, like Titus Oates, Salisbury was the real architect of the conspiracy, who somehow contrived to put it in the minds of the Catholic rebels? If that sounds too far-fetched, there is another possibility. It's much more likely that Salisbury discovered the Catholic plot weeks or months before it was put into effect, and allowed it to go ahead so he could jump in and put paid to it at the last minute, thus appearing to be a blue-blooded English hero!

The aim of the Popish Plot – and of the Gunpowder Plot too, if you believe the conspiracy theories – was to discredit Catholics as a whole. But the Babington Plot was targeted at just one Catholic in particular – Mary Queen of Scots. This finely focused false flag operation led directly to Mary's execution on 8 February 1587, on the orders of Queen Elizabeth I of England.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES


Hi mihi sunt Comites quos ipsa pericula ducunt
In quo quis peccat In eo punitur.
F.H.
Babington with his Complices in St. Giles fields.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

The two queens were long-time rivals – Mary was a Catholic and Elizabeth was a Protestant. Elizabeth had kept Mary prisoner for almost 20 years, since 1568, but she was looking for a more permanent solution. Eventually the perfect opportunity presented itself. A coded letter was intercepted from Mary to Anthony Babington, a young Englishman who was plotting a Catholic revolution that would commence with the assassination of Queen Elizabeth. In the letter, Mary gave her unequivocal support to both the assassination and the revolution. It was a clear case of treason, and just the excuse Elizabeth needed to chop off Mary's head.

While the earnest young Babington was perfectly serious in his plans, there was a small detail he was unaware of. Virtually all his co-conspirators were members of the English government – double agents loyal to Elizabeth. They were working to a completely different agenda from Babington himself. There was no way they were going to allow the assassination or subsequent revolution to go ahead – they simply needed Mary to believe that it would. The real purpose of the plot was to get Mary to incriminate herself. FT

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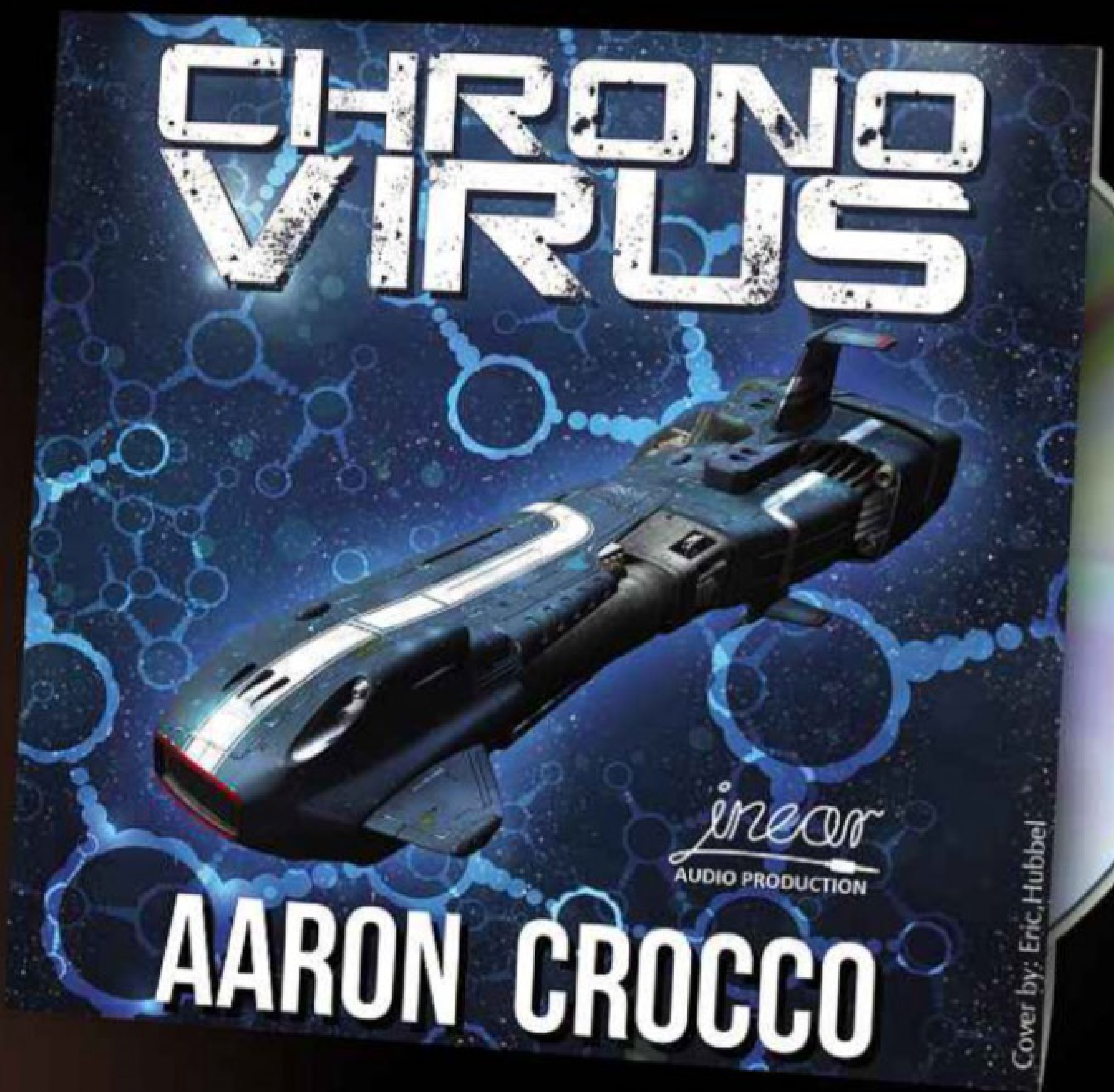

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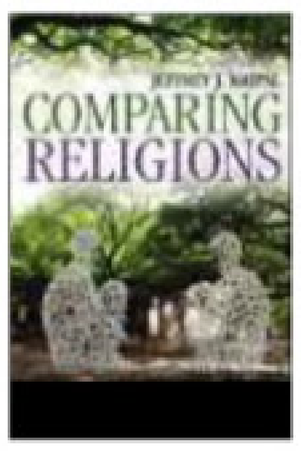
reviews

A religious life less ordinary

Kripal goes against the modern grain by highlighting the extraordinary and uncanny and stimulating discussion in his comparative (and very fortean) study of religions



Comparing Religions

Jeffrey J Kripal with Ata Anzali, Andrea R Jain & Erin Prophet

Wiley Blackwell 2014

Pb, 448pp, £25.99, ISBN 9781405184588

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £23.39

If there is to be a textbook on the comparative study of religions that introduces students to the complexity of religious plurality and enables them to aptly re-evaluate their place in this increasingly interconnected, global 21st century, Jeffrey J Kripal is the right scholar to write it.

Over the past two decades, Kripal has written and edited a dozen boundary-pushing books on religion, mysticism, eroticism, human potential and psychical experiences. Most directly connected to fortean interests have been *Mutants & Mystics* (2011), *Authors of the Impossible* (2010), and *Esalen* (2007), and a volume of essays co-edited with Sudhir Kakar, *Seriously Strange* (2012). Kripal has been an active proponent of interdisciplinary thinking and work on these topics, and this textbook, *Comparing Religions*, urges students (and all readers) to adopt a deeper and reflexive approach to comparing religions, historically and contemporarily.

It is, as Kripal writes, a way of "coming to terms" for each individual reader. Excitingly, his textbook "privileges the extraordinary and uncanny over the ordinary and the common", which moves against the grain of much traditional scholarship that has flattened the view of religions by discarding the fantastical. Kripal points out that "the standard 'world religions' approach tends to leave most of the interesting questions and all of the most difficult ones unasked, much less answered".

Comparing Religions dynamically and unabashedly dives head-first into the weird as deeply significant to the study. It is an enormously beneficial tool that we, as students of the strange, can benefit from having in our toolkit, particularly in light of the excessively ignorant, dichotomic debates that pollute everyday conversations, media and the information highway. How can we critically assess and advance how we think about the weird and wonderful within greater contexts of world ideologies, systems, and actions?

Comparing Religions helps better situate the reader in this complicated, pluralistic world – anomalies included. This is where the fortean is edging into mainstream learning. It leads to questions on what plurality and the comparative approach means for readers and their religious/ideological communities, and how comparison changes (or doesn't change) how one thinks on other religions as well as one's own context. The process of comparison and the answers that emerge will not be the same for each reader. The result for each reader will, no doubt, be deeply personal.

Kripal aims to expand readers' views of world religions and of their own religion (or lack thereof) and enable further exploration of why there are so many answers available regarding the big questions about life and how we live.

> **"Much scholarship has flattened the view on religions by discarding the fantastical"**

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, 'Prehistory, Preparation, and Perspective', sets out to define how we compare religions, first examining how monotheist, polytheist and Asian religions saw themselves *vis à vis* other religions in ancient times. Then it looks at the development of the modern study of religion, and after setting out working definitions, asks readers to consider their own assumptions of religions. Part II explores 'Comparative Acts', looking at the creative functions of myth and ritual, and at the comparative practices around religion, nature, science, sex and the human body. The transmission of power via charisma and the social dimensions of religion are then examined, followed by the paranormal powers of the religious imagination. The 'Comparative Acts' conclude by examining 'The Final Questions of Soul, Salvation, and the End of All Things'.

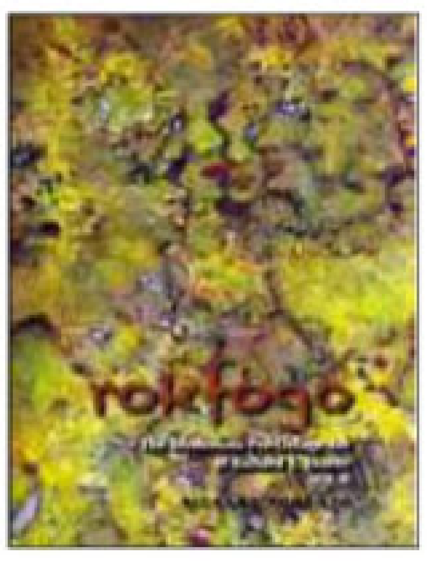
Part III, 'Putting It All Together Again', challenges students to "refashion our worldviews in the light of the spectacles we have seen and oracles we have heard". The tasks at hand are to better comprehend "why there are hundreds, really thousands of religious answers to life's questions and not just one or two". What does this mean for the reader's own views and for their views of other religions? Kripal *et al* engage students in a process of "re-reading" religions from faithful, rational and reflexive perspectives.

Forteana flows through the text, disrupting assumptions and embedding itself into the spectrum of religious experiences and ideas. Since the book is all about comparison, it is very striking to see, for example, the acceptance of the levitating 17th-century Saint Joseph of Copertino, Catholic patron of pilots, astronauts and air travellers, compared to scepticism over the levitating 19th-century medium Daniel Douglas Home, whose feats were overall demonstrated in a more secular context. Lightforms, life after death, psychoactive plants, UFOs, Mark Twain's precognitive dream, the Mothman, the Old Hag and hoaxes are all compared within religious frameworks in ways that draw together the orthodox and heterodox. Everything leads to toolkits through which students and well-versed forteans can reassess what they think (or believe) in relation to worldwide religious ideologies, practices and structures. Of course there are gaps. The textbook is an introduction and meant to stimulate reflexivity and discussion that will further individual readers' journeys from which they may better explore what matters to them. It is about structure over content

Continued on p60

Sermons in stones…

Richard Shaver portrayed an alternative history, revealed by rocks, of the time before the Moon dropped onto the Earth



Rokfogo

The Mysterious Pre-Deluge Art of Richard S Shaver, Vol I

Richard Toronto

Shavertron Press 2014
Pb, 104pp, $24.95, ISBN 9780991139620
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

Rokfogo

The Mysterious Pre-Deluge Art of Richard S Shaver, Vol II

Richard Toronto

Shavertron Press 2014
Pb., 108pp, $24.95, ISBN 9780991139637
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

The Shaver mystery just gets curiouser and curiouser. Its creator, Richard Shaver, died in 1975; its publicist and promoter, Ray Palmer, two years later. Yet thanks in good part to their biographer, Richard Toronto (author of the riveting 2013 *War Over Lemuria*), the "pre-deluge" Elder World survives to irritate the memories of those who, wisely or otherwise, have paid attention.

The 'Shaver mystery', as flamboyant science-fiction editor Palmer dubbed it seven decades ago, is unattached to anything else: not anomalistics, ufology, occultism, esoteric religion, hollow-earth musing or lost-continent lore. (Even 'Lemuria' is not the fabled sunken Pacific land.) It's something Shaver invented though he stubbornly insisted upon its reality till the end. It's partly the consequence of mental disorder, partly the product of Shaver's chaotic imagination fuelled – to the extent that any of its elements are plausibly traceable – by pulp SF and A Merritt's fantasy novels.

Only a few excitable souls ever placed the caves, the *deros* (their diabolical inhabitants), and Shaver's alternative history within consensus reality. (The believers' ranks included neither Toronto nor Shaver's late, long-suffering wife Dorothy.) Today, one would have to cast a wide net to snare anybody for whom the Shaver mystery is more than somebody's dreams and nightmares. The evidence supporting Shaver's claims is – does this need saying? – nonexistent, which brings us to the two volumes under review.

Sometime around 1960, Shaver grew obsessed with the notion that many common stones are "rock books" – *rokfogo*, the pre-delugers called them. These contain discernible photographic images of scenes from the era before the Moon dropped onto the Earth (it happened three times – don't ask) and caused, as one might imagine (and as Shaver did, in fact, imagine), immense destruction. Shaver further held that the images are parts of a larger narrative, a kind of illustrated book which one can read by cutting a particular stone into thin pieces. Given the peculiarities of the Elder World's population, the scenes as Shaver (alone) saw them are unsettling and bizarre.

If that were all, Toronto couldn't have assembled these volumes. But Shaver was, along with much else, a frustrated artist. Rokfogo provided both "proof" of the pre-delugers and an outlet for his painting, which he laid on cheap materials such as cardboard (he struggled financially) and went on a binge of frenetic activity that lasted the rest of his life. While they won't convince you of the validity of Shaver's stories, the results reproduced here – detailed, profusely coloured, suffocatingly crowded scenes of not-quite human figures (many of them naked women, or something like them) – are striking. You could get lost in them. It appears Shaver did.

Shaver naturally thought he had stumbled upon the discovery of all time, precisely the sort of error in judgment that guarantees sputtering frustration as soon as the realisation sets in that the rest of the world is paying so little attention that it can't be bothered even to disagree. Palmer, then publishing true-mystery magazines out of Amherst, Wisconsin, saw the rock art as simply another opportunity to exploit Shaver, leading to the final break between the two one-time partners. Others so poorly understood what Shaver was trying to communicate that one woman (quoted in Toronto's biography) thought he meant "there were tribes of tiny people who lived in rocks." Which is hardly less logical than what Shaver was trying to say.

Still, the images, which don't look like anything else you're likely to have seen, catch the eye and fill it with befuddled awe. No wonder the paintings eventually found their way to devotees of outsider art. There, Shaver has achieved a measure of validation, if not of the kind he sought.

Meantime, he could not have asked for a more literate chronicler than Toronto, a genial, level-headed observer who has meticulously documented the career of the irascible, half-mad Shaver. As with all else concerning Shaver, the present volumes take us into a mysterious place, not the caves where menacing creatures from the Elder World survive to torment us but the psyche of an endlessly odd man who will not let us forget him. Enter here, if you dare.

Jerome Clark

Fortean Times Verdict

THE INNER MIND OF A UNIQUE MYTHOLOGIST REVEALED **9**

Continued from p59

and process over firm answers. The text will frustrate, amuse, enlighten and surprise, moving away from "either-or" illusions and toward "both-and" reasoning. It is an emotional, intellectually stimulating and enthralling exploration, filled with ripping yarns that guide readers to unfamiliar places – the very rich veins that reward the fortean traveller with a more expansive view of this mysterious landscape that we have created.

Comparing Religions is a vital contribution to the difficult task of bridging scholarly disciplines (such as the humanities and sciences), academia and public, critical thinking and popular beliefs.

Christopher Laursen

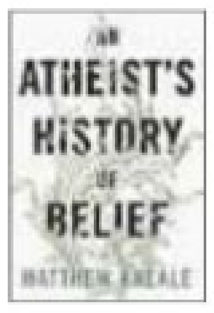
Fortean Times Verdict

REWIRING WORLD RELIGIONS WITH FORTEAN CIRCUITRY **10**

An Atheist's History of Belief

Matthew Kneale

Vintage Books 2014
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.54



Good title for a book, that, holding out the teasing question of whether it's a New Atheism rant or a secular enquiry into an area dominated (not necessarily for good reasons, in this reviewer's humble opinion) by the study of religion. Belief isn't just religion, after all; there's a whole fortean universe of exotic and often logic-defying beliefs that have little or no connection to a supreme being, and a whole panoply of ideological positions (many of them every bit as quaint as the eldritch extremes of forteana).

Well, the good news is it turned out not to be the NA rant. It is, I think, a genuine attempt to understand belief; but it's a weak and disappointing effort in the end. Kneale has a narrow conception of belief – we are 191 pages into the book before he mentions an arguably non-religious belief – and a less than exciting hypothesis for its existence. Religious belief, he claims, is a matter of reassurance.

To back up this less than convincing theory, the author embarks on a survey of religion from pre-historic times up to the present day. His focus is not as wide as it might be; the bulk of the book is a history of Christianity, well-trodden ground in which he discovers no new or original tracks. It's also a tad naïve (almost gullible, I might say) in its dealing with Christianity, largely treating the Gospel Jesus as an historical figure, and the Gospels as his authentic biography.

Perhaps this is why his explanation of religious belief is so lame; Christianity is a crusty institution sown securely into the fabric of European culture, a padding of comfort for the semi-devout. It is probably not the best place to look for a radical, or comprehensive, originating framework, or to understand the extraordinary range of practices, theologies and worldviews that the term 'religion' can encompass.

It is difficult to see shamanic practices as a response to insecurity; it is equally difficult to see the use of psychoactive plants and extreme physical regimes as a placatory gesture. These are surely, among other things, a species of enquiry into the great unknown, the intangible reality that surrounds the sensational and often dwarfs it. In many circumstances, they are precisely the opposite of reassurance.

I found myself suspecting that Kneale is rather fond of Christianity, and perhaps reassured by it, even if he is an atheist (there are those who would suggest that modern atheism is a minor sect of Christianity, after all). This suspicion was underlined by the generous, and occasionally eccentric, use of italics in the book, which gave it the look of a surreptitious homage to the King James Bible. And I still think it's a really good title for a book.

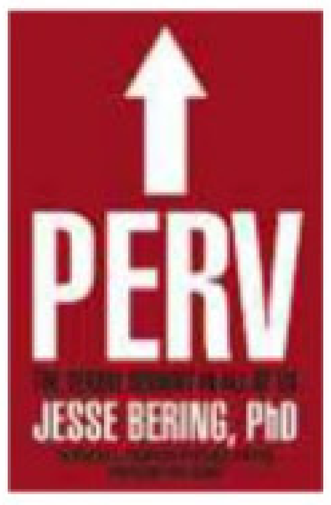
Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict

A NARROW DEFINITION OF BELIEF, BUT A GREAT TITLE FOR A BOOK **6**

You're one too, really

A study of unusual sexual tastes from bestiality to plushies raises interesting and discomfiting moral conundrums



Perv

The Sexual Deviant in all of Us

Jesse Bering

Transworld Books 2013

Hb, 265pp, notes, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9780857520401

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

When we sort the newspaper clippings that arrive in profusion at Fortean Towers, one of the frequently used files is 'Sexual Oddities', the content of which bears witness to the breadth of imaginative weirdness through which humanity expresses its sexuality. With *Perv*, Jesse Bering has essentially written a scientific study of our Sexual Oddities file.

Bering's purpose is to normalise the spectrum of human desire, or at least attempt to understand it. His essential thesis, succinctly summarised by the cover art, is that we are all, in some way, 'perverts'. (Really, really do not read this on the Tube!) Whether your sexuality is completely vanilla, or you only really thrill to plushies and vore (yes, I know; look it up, just not at work), your specific sexual tastes are uniquely yours. Bering also proposes that these sexualities are essentially innate, and created through a combination of genetic predisposition and early life experiences, so that by the time we reach adulthood, there's not much anyone can do to alter them in a major way, however much psychiatry, legislation or moralising we might care to assault them with.

This is not, however a campaigning polemic for sexual tolerance – well, not just, anyway… It is a well-researched summary of current academic thinking in the field of sexuality, and a highly-personal piece of gonzo confessional – few other writers would nonchalantly admit to an early masturbatory fixation on pictures of Neanderthals in anthropology textbooks. It, is perhaps though, in this mix that the problem with this book is to be found.

It is clear that Bering's inspiration lies in his experiences coming out as a gay man (not as traumatic as he feared) and his desire to see that people with different sexualities have their orientations met with similar understanding and support. His academic sources present a powerful argument in favour of this, but at the same time his clearly stated opinions lead to the suspicion that he is cherry-picking his research to support his views rather than presenting an objective view of the field and drawing conclusions from that, even if he isn't.

Bering does have the brio to bring his research to vivid life, whether discussing toe-sucking, 17th century bestiality, the semen ingestion rituals of the Sambia people of New Guinea, or indeed someone who got his kicks from injecting his semen into his co-workers' lunchtime yogurts through the foil lid. He is wise enough, though, to tone the writing down when he gets to the vexed matter of age. A lesser and perhaps more cautious writer would have skirted this issue, but Bering's logic inexorably takes him into this most difficult of territories, and he does not flinch from sharing the conclusions to which the research seems to point. Suffice to say, he feels that the path that would deliver the least harm to those who are most vulnerable does not accord particularly well with the current legal and moral position adopted by most countries. This raises all sorts of concerns, particularly in the light of the impression given elsewhere of potential cherry picking of the data. It also takes us into the deeply complex and contested territory in which there is dispute as to whether laws should purely be about minimising harm, or creating a moral framework for society, and many books could be written on this alone.

These matters are far from resolved, but it is to Bering's credit that he does not avoid addressing the matter of age and sex, and is willing to draw uncomfortable conclusions that not all will find palatable.

Perv is an unfortunate title for a book of this nature, as it is a far more measured and sensible exploration of the strange byways of the sexual landscape than it would lead you to expect.

In the end it admirably delivers its message which is essentially "it's complex" and "understand and consider before making judgements".

Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict

LET (S)HE WHO IS WITHOUT SOME WEIRD SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE **6**

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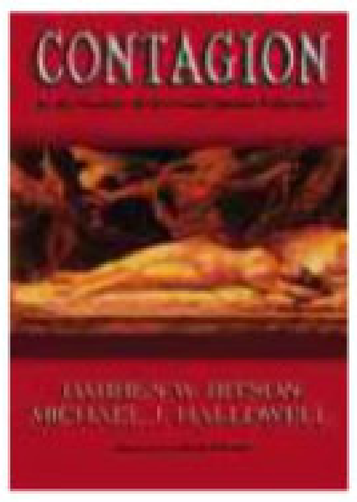
Standby polt

Are polts manifestations of a higher intelligence, tricky spirits or TVs left on?



Contagion

In the Shadow of the South Shields Poltergeist

Darren W Ritson & Michael J Hallowell

The Limbury Press 2014

Pb, 206 pp, illus, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9780956522894

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

In 2006, Mike Hallowell and Darren Ritson investigated a major poltergeist case in the north-east of England, subsequently writing *The South Shields Poltergeist: One Family's Fight Against an Invisible Intruder*. Their new book highlights parallels between that case and others they've investigated or read about.

They believe that poltergeist phenomena may obtain energy from electrical appliances that are left on 'standby'. When the family in the South Shields case started turning off their electrical appliances at night, the phenomenon appeared to cease abruptly. Ritson and Hallowell also contend that poltergeist activity creates fear or stress, because it 'feeds' on it. They may be right, but it's a somewhat strange notion, because fear and stress are states, not types of energy or physical substances.

The authors use the word "contagion" to refer to the process whereby poltergeist phenomena can spread out from the home of the principal witnesses and affect others, such as members of their extended family, or investigators. But they note that the activity seems to become diluted as it spreads. They speculate that contagion could be either active (deliberate) or passive (automatic).

They believe that contagion occurred during the South Shields case. A graphologist, to whom they'd sent examples of ostensible poltergeist writing for analysis, was looking at the images (photographs of the writing, I presume) in her garden when she felt a 'presence' behind her. She sensed that it was a tall man in a long, dark coat. A child at the South Shields home had reportedly seen such a figure numerous times.

Ritson and Hallowell suggest that poltergeists may not be individual, independent entities, but rather a "hive-mind" or collective – an "arch-poltergeist", in effect. That accords with my own view, that many paranormal phenomena (including some of the UFO type) may be the orchestrations of a tricksy higher intelligence. However, Hallowell recently converted to Islam, and now interprets poltergeist phenomena in line with the notion of the Jinn – a supposed race of mostly mischievous, or even malevolent, spirit beings.

The book contains errors that could have been weeded out with proficient proofreading. On p18, the authors state that the events they describe are "entirely true", though some names have been changed, "along with other incidental details", to safeguard anonymity. Pseudonyms are marked with an asterisk at their first appearance, which is helpful. But the changing of "incidental details" worries me slightly, since it means that the book can't be entirely true! But on the plus side, it's very readable, includes a good collection of photographs and has an index. Despite its minor defects, it's a very interesting contribution to the literature on paranormal phenomena.

Peter A McCue

Fortean Times Verdict

READABLE AND INTERESTING, BUT THE DETAILS ARE SLIPPERY **8**

Too Good To Be True

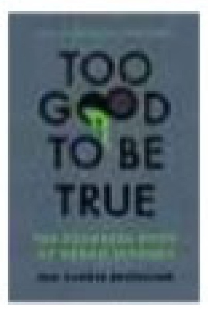
The Colossal Book of Urban Legends (Revised Ed)

Jan Harold Brunvand

WW Norton 2014

Pb, 544pp, £12.99/$18.95, ISBN 9780393347159

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99



Professor Brunvand is best known for popularising the term "urban legend". By applying academic techniques developed in the study of myths and legends to contemporary stories, he has transformed the public's perception of folklore from something ancient or rural, into something modern and urban. *Too Good To Be True - The Colossal Book of Urban Legends* is a collection of over 200 such folk tales and you are sure to find at least one story you always believed to be true included. For me, it was the story of a woman microwaving her pet cat to dry it – only in the version I heard, it was a hamster that exploded, not a cat.

The wonderfully weird anecdotes are spread over 24 chapters, each organised by theme, and this revised edition of Brunvand's 2001 anthology includes a new chapter on 'Bad Things That Happen'. The author does an excellent job of documenting where each story first appeared and evaluating the evidence for the claims, reassuring the reader when they have nothing to worry about because they aren't true... probably.

Older stories are linked to more recent ones, demonstrating how urban legends continue to evolve. As Brunvand writes in his introduction: "As folk stories are repeated from person to person, and even some degree in printed circulation, they constantly change in minor details while retaining a consistent narrative core." A good example is the story of an injured German First World War soldier telling his British nurse to avoid the London subway in April 1915, which is linked to stories about grateful Arab terrorists in more recent times post 9/11.

Many of the stories included are morbidly fascinating, for instance those about wartime cannibalism also included in the new chapter, the most ghoulish of which concerns missing children in Estonia and an underground sausage factory after World War II, when allegedly "sausages were made from human flesh"... In another grisly tale, a drugged-out babysitter mistakes a baby for a turkey and tries cooking the infant in the oven.

If stories of cannibalism are too grisly for you, however, there are lots of more comedic stories covered in this massive anthology of over 500 pages. These include everything from alligators in the sewers to exploding toilets and bras. Everyone enjoys a wacky sex story. The co-workers of a young single woman decided to give her a surprise birthday party, but the surprise is on them. They find the woman completely naked and covered in peanut butter with her Great Dane dog Rex eagerly licking it off her.

Conspiracy buffs will likely jump past these funnier accounts to darker ones, of course, and it gets pretty dark in places, like the stories about the origins of Aids. These include: that Aids was a chemical experiment that went astray; that the CIA created the virus in a laboratory and brought it to Africa to test on black Africans; and that the disease was intended to wipe out black people and gay men, allegedly to return America "to the old days of the moral majority". With similar theories now circling on the internet about Ebola being a CIA engineered biological weapon, it is easy to see how urban legends morph to fit events.

The book has something to suit all tastes and interests. Other subjects included are: the criminal mind, cars, accidents, the supernatural, technology, mistaken identity, university life, food, wildlife and lots more. There are inevitably going to be chapters that won't interest all readers, but with an RRP of just £12.99, this is a massive bargain, even if you don't read it cover to cover.

Richard Thomas

Fortean Times Verdict

A SENSIBLE JOURNEY THROUGH MODERN FOLK TALES **9**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

Screening the Undead

Leon hunt, Sharon Lockyer and Milly Williamson (eds)

IB Tauris 2014

Pb, 272pp, illus, notes, ind, £15.99, ISBN 9781848859241

Monsters come and go, enjoying their (sometimes cyclical) moments of popular appeal and cultural significance before shambling back to the crypt. The undead – specifically the vampire and the zombie; the poor old mummy gets short shrift – have dominated recent horror cinema, so an academic volume devoted to these linked, but very different, horror icons is welcome. Vampires are one of the oldest staples of popular horror fiction, zombies one of the most recent (traceable, in their current non-Voodoo form to Romero's 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*); both, though, tap into ideas about feeding on, infecting and overtaking humanity that writers, filmmakers and audiences continue to find rich and fascinating. Growing out of Brunel University's Cine-Excess conferences, *Screening the Undead* offers a symposium of subjects and approaches as varied as its subject. Just as modern-day vampires can encompass everything from *Buffy* to *Let the Right One In*, so the contributors to this volume address everything from global and local dimensions of the cinema of the undead to countercultural vampire figures; from environmental disaster in Italian zombie movies to the nature of cult hybridisation in *The Happiness of the Katakuris*. Of course, it's a mixed bag, ranging from clear and convincing contextual readings of, say, the Spanish *Blind Dead* films, to painfully turgid considerations of "Gay Zombies, Homonormativity and Consuming Masculinity in Queer Horror". As with any gathering of cultural studies types, the book offers hilariously rich pickings for pseud-watchers (Barry Baldwin would be in his element) in both content and author bios ("She researches in the sociology of mediated culture"), but there's plenty of insight, too, into an unexpectedly rich sub-generic landscape of contemporary cinema and TV.

Alien Universe

Don Lincoln

Johns Hopkins University Press 2013

Hb, 195pp, illus, bib, ind, $29.95, ISBN 9781421410722

Have you ever had a sleepless night worrying whether aliens exist and, if so, why we have no solid proof? Fear not, they are already here and in our heads, or rather, in most Earth cultures. Lincoln, a Fermi Labs physicist, provides in the first half of this book a fairly competent cultural history of our perennial fascination with these unearthly outsiders. The second half considers the same question from the point of view of astronomy and cosmology. Much of this is old hat, but usefully brought up to date. Ultimately, neither question is conclusively answered.

The World's Most Haunted House

William J Hall

New Page Books 2014

Pb, 251pp, illus, bib, notes, ind, $15.99, ISBN 9781601633378

The house in question is a small clapboard bungalow on Lindley Street, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, home to the Goodin family since 1960 and, since November 1974, to a poltergeist. Hall, an accomplished stage magician in his own right, knew all the ways a house could be rigged and sleight-of-hand tricks performed close up to give the impression of a haunting... in fact, he admits he began his investigation believing it to be a hoax. After prolonged and intimate investigation, and 60 hours of recorded interviews with the family and other investigators, he concludes the phenomena were "real beyond any doubt". What makes this account even more interesting is that the 'confession' of their 10-year-old daughter, while superficially satisfying claims the phenomena were faked, could, on examination, be easily shown to be the untutored statements of a child trying to please the perplexed adults around her, leaving even more questions unanswered. An excellent study of a seemingly genuine mystery.

Inside the Real Area 51

Thomas J Carey & Donald R Schmitt

New Page Books 2014

Pb, 288pp, illus, bib, notes, ind, $16.99, ISBN 9781601632364

Two veteran UFO conspiracy-ologists tackle the mythology of the notorious 'Hangar 18' in what the blurb calls a "secret history"... one so secret, apparently, that these and other authors can spill the beans about it in defiance of national security officials and MIBs. Nevertheless, here are wads of seemingly credible eyewitness testimony to the goings-on in "the foreign-technology division" of Wright-Patterson Air Base, backed up by impressive fieldwork and research. The authors themselves remain convinced that Hangar 18 was the destination for all fragments of alien bodies and alien technology recovered from so-called UFO 'crash sites'. The book ends with an account of the authors' frustration after going through official channels to get access to the location, even when staff inside lobbied on their behalf. Dense with details, this could well be the most definitive book on the subject... until actual secrecy is ended.

Wizards: From Merlin to Faust

David & Lesley McIntee

Osprey Adventures 2014

Pb, 80pp, illus, bib, £10.99, ISBN 9781472803399

A charming romp through history and legend, gathering some of the classical figures associated with magic, alchemy, demonology and necromancy, illustrated with dramatic, full colour paintings by Mark Stacey. Holding aloft the maxim of the Brothers Grimm – "Our minds expect a better tale of good and evil from a wizard than from a giant or dwarf" – the authors tell again of Dedi, the palace magician of pharaoh Khufu; Simon Magus, Virgil, Gerber, Merlin, one of the Chinese Eight Immortals, Celini and Flamel, Bothwell, Dee and Faust. To balance the myths, each wizard is given a historical biography. Great for young minds, as it balances wonder with fact and context.

The Stonehenge Codes

David P Gregg

Green Man Books 2014

Pb, 256pp, refs, £12.57, ISBN 9781495254284

Into the vacuum left by the late John Michell steps Professor Gregg with a densely detailed mathematical and geometric analysis of the layouts and dimensions of a range of megalithic henges, with less numerology and more astro-archæology. His aim is to establish whether the statistical equivalences between these monuments were deliberate or coincidental. There is also a chapter attempting to extract astronomical information from the famous mechanical 'computer' from Antikythera.

Merrily's Border

Phil Rickman and John Mason

Logaston Press 2014

Pb, 132pp, illus, index, £14.95, ISBN 9781906663698

Fans of Phil Rickman's Merrily Watkins series of spooky detective/paranormal thrillers will welcome the opportunity to explore the real-life locations on the Welsh Borders that have inspired the settings and events of the books. The Borders are a liminal zone: neither England nor Wales, they're alive with the local legends and folklore of both countries. Hereford native Alfred Watkins hunted leys back and forth across the hills here, Dr Dee lived at Nant-y-groes, near Presteigne; apparitions of the BVM were seen at Capel-y-ffin (see Phil's Fortean Traveller entry in **FT309:72-74**), and fairies at Cusop Dingle. Whether or not you know this beautiful part of the world, Rickman's lively text and John Mason's evocative photos will likely inspire a visit.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

Extraterrestrial

Dir The Vicious Brothers, US 2014
On UK release

The Vicious Brothers, for those who don't know, are filmmakers Colin Minihan and Stuart Ortiz, whose low-budget first feature, *Grave Encounters*, became the Tribeca Film festival's most popular on-demand title in 2011, grossing more than $1 million and spawning a sequel. In fact, it became their debut feature by default, as the script they planned to shoot – *Extraterrestrial* – was too ambitious and too expensive to realise. Now, that debut's success has allowed the Vicious Brothers to bring us the alien abduction horror film they always wanted to make.

I'll be honest: before going to see the film I watched the trailer. That coupled with the movie's tagline – "Be prepared to be probed" – meant I'd set my expectations pretty low. In some ways, at least, I was pleasantly surprised.

April (Brittany Allen) goes to visit the family holiday home in the wake of her parents' divorce, to find that boyfriend Kyle (Freddie Stroma) has invited himself and a bunch of their friends along as part of his plan to propose to her. So, off they all go to a cabin in the woods to do what teenagers always do in such an environment: drink booze, smoke grass, flirt with one another… and die horribly.

This time, though, the killer isn't a masked homicidal maniac, a crazed, townie-hating hillbilly or an ancient demon awoken by the ill-advised reading of long forgotten books. This time, the culling of the innocents falls to alien visitors – specifically, tall greys with black, almond shaped eyes – conducting some sort of interstellar experiment for which they need human test subjects.

The wood in which the cabin is situated has already been experiencing a lot of fortean activity: livestock mutilations, missing people and unexplained lights in the sky. Sheriff Murphy (Gil Bellows) knows something is going on, but doesn't seem inclined to look further into the situation (even though his own wife mysteriously disappeared some 10 years earlier). The friends witness a light fall from the sky and go to investigate, stumbling across a downed saucer and a set of footprints heading off into the woods. Horrified, they race back to the cabin, only to be terrorised by the crashed UFO's occupant. They subsequently discover that by killing the creature with a shotgun they've broken a treaty established between Earth governments and the alien visitors: the result is angry extraterrestrials with the very human motivation of revenge. Will April and her friends escape the aliens? Will Kyle's proposal be answered? Will the Sheriff ever be spurred into action?

There's not an awful lot here that's new; much of it will leave a screaming sense of déjà vu in the back of your mind. The Vicious Brothers have cited *Fire from the Sky* as a big influence on *Extraterrestrial*, and it's a very visible one – in fact Robert Leiberman's 1993 film about the Travis Walton abduction is sometimes mimicked scene for scene, although always within the constraints of a much lower budget. What made *Fire in the Sky* the fright-fest it was is largely down to the film's "true story" aspect (in as much as any account of alien abduction can be 'true'), and the fact that it gave us an early screen version of the whole alien abduction scenario. *Extraterrestrial* treads the same ground, offering nothing novel or unexplored, nor debating the status of the abduction experience (although in what is really a by-the-numbers horror movie, why should it?). Other films are also referenced – from *Aliens* to *Close Encounters* – and there's a very surprising cameo at the film's climax from a well-known character from a long-running fortean TV show (he's not played by the original actor, but there's no doubt as to who he's meant to be).

Just as the treatment of alien abduction offers nothing surprising in filmic terms, the horror happenings also fail to deliver anything you haven't seen before: there are jumps and shocks, some predictable and others failing completely. And then there's the probing scene – one that the Vicious Brothers admit does nothing to propel the plot but which they wanted very much to get into the movie. Its inclusion baffles me. It's either there in order to push the film's certificate, or even risk it being banned, or the Brothers are working out some major internal issues on the big screen.

The ensemble of actors varies from the very good – with Brittany Allen, in particular, standing out – to the woefully out of their depth. In amongst them, you'll find Michael Ironside as Travis (ahem), a former family friend who now lives off the grid, grows his own and has the inside track to alien visitations from Roswell right up to the present-day situation. His lines are creaky, but he delivers them, as ever, with conviction.

So, while novelty-seekers won't find much to detain (or entertain) them in *Extraterrestrial*, the Vicious Brothers do exhibit film-making skills that promise a lot more as their careers develop and their budgets grow. The aliens are decidedly creepy and some of the effects are impressive – even more so when you realise the Brothers created them themselves. Part of the film's appeal is the fact they pulled it off with such a small budget ($3 million) and a production beset with funding problems that almost closed down the shoot. It's noteworthy that none of these behind-the-camera problems seem to have dampened the enthusiasm these two young filmmakers had for this project. This kind of determined vision should be applauded, and for that reason I wouldn't dismiss this low budget abduction-horror hybrid. The Vicious Brothers deserve a bigger audience and a bigger budget to play with – although perhaps some help on the writing side would be welcome.

Mark McConnell

Fortean Times Verdict
MORE PROMISE THAN ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENT ON SHOW HERE **5**

Red Shift

Dir. John Mackenzie, UK 1978
BFI, £19.99 DVD

The Owl Service and *Red Shift* were the transitional works between Alan Garner's early children's fantasies and his later, more complex adult novels. Both were televised, the first as an ITV series in 1969-70 (released on DVD as late as 2008); but *Red Shift*, broadcast as a one-off BBC 'Play for Today' in 1978 and never reshown, has been unavailable until now except as a poor quality off-air bootleg.

Brilliantly directed and edited, the play follows the book closely, jumping without warning between three apparently unrelated stories: watching it is not an easy experience. In the present day, Tom (Stephen Petcher), a highly intelligent teenager equally at home with Shakespeare and astronomy, is stifled by living in a caravan in a Cheshire village with his overbearing and prurient parents. He finds some release with his girlfriend Jan (a young Lesley Dunlop), though he has difficulty expressing his feelings. Jan goes to London to train as a nurse and they meet for a few hours once a month when she comes up by train to Crewe.

In the Civil War, Thomas Rowley (Charles Bolton) is a troubled young man, caught between the woman who loves him, her earlier suitor (now on the opposing side) and a domineering villager. When Royalists attack they take refuge in a church, but most of the men are massacred.

In Roman Britain, Macey (Andrew Byatt) is one of a small squad of soldiers from the lost Ninth Legion. Goaded by his leader, he goes into a berserker rage, killing the local tribesmen with a stone axe. The squad go native, and keep a young woman alive for sex.

The three story strands are linked by their location – Mow Cop, a hill in Cheshire near Garner's home – and by the stone axe which Thomas and Tom both find. But each strand also focuses on an emotionally fragile youth and the people around him. In these interlinked stories, adolescents are seen trying to cope with powerful adult passions, including discovering how sex can be destructive.

Red Shift is about the complexity, ambiguity, confusion and pain of relationships, of two people negotiating where and how they connect when others are entangled in their lives. Instability is at the heart of the story. Each of the three young men is troubled in some way: Macey and Thomas have what may be epileptic fits, while Tom's high intelligence and difficulty with emotion suggest Asperger's. Garner himself is bipolar.

The three youths are also connected psychically and emotionally across the centuries. Macey in Roman Britain and Thomas in the Civil War are haunted by flashes of blue and silver, sometimes with a touch of red, with no comprehension that they're seeing the rushing of an intercity train far in their future, in Tom's present

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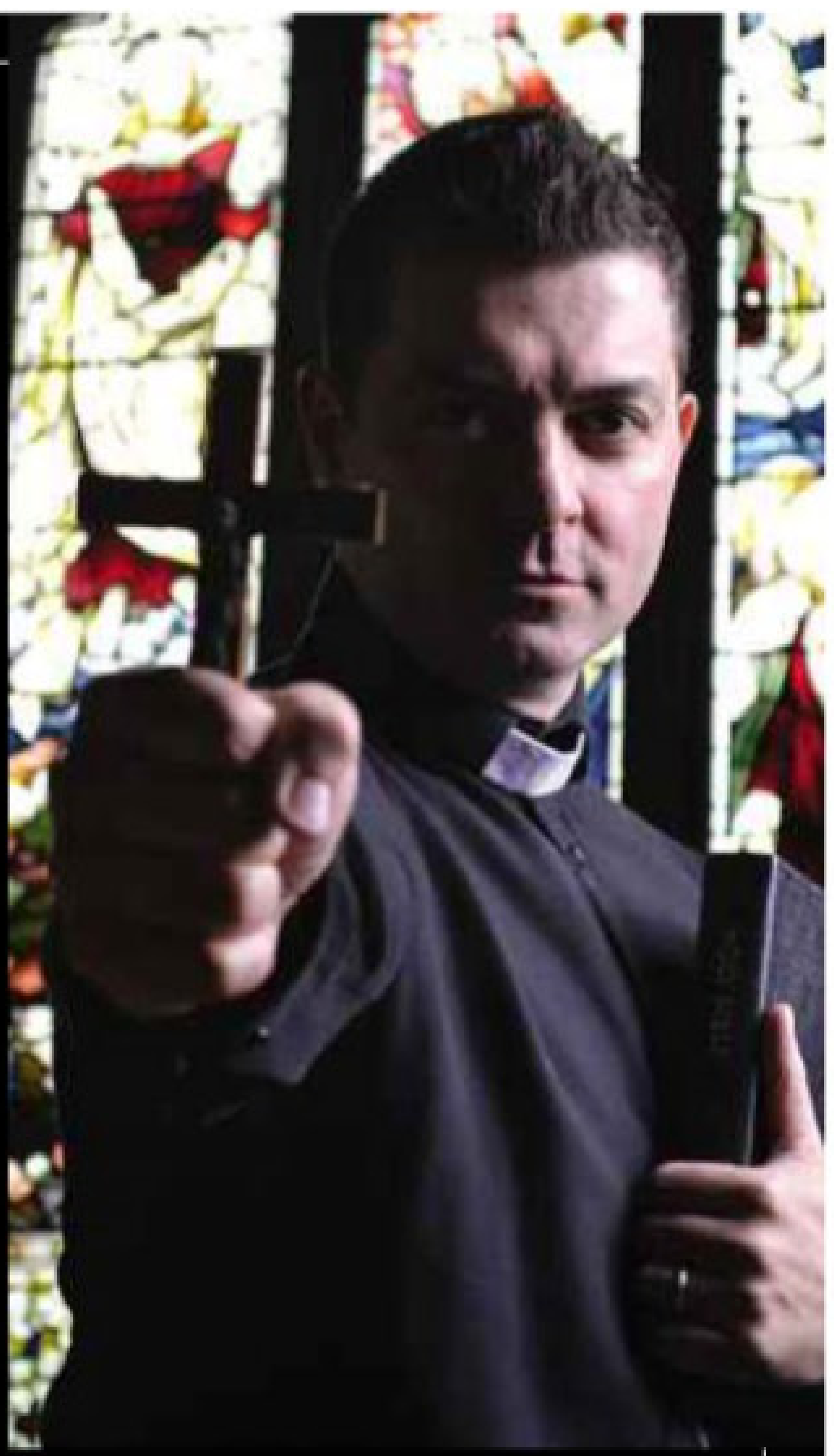


THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Dir Tobe Hooper, US 1974
Second Sight, £18.99 (Ltd Edition Steelbook)

SHIVERS

Dir David Cronenberg, Canada 1975
Arrow Video, £17.99 (Blu-ray)

MARK OF THE DEVIL

Dir Michael Armstrong, UK 1970
Arrow Video, £17.99 (Blu-ray)

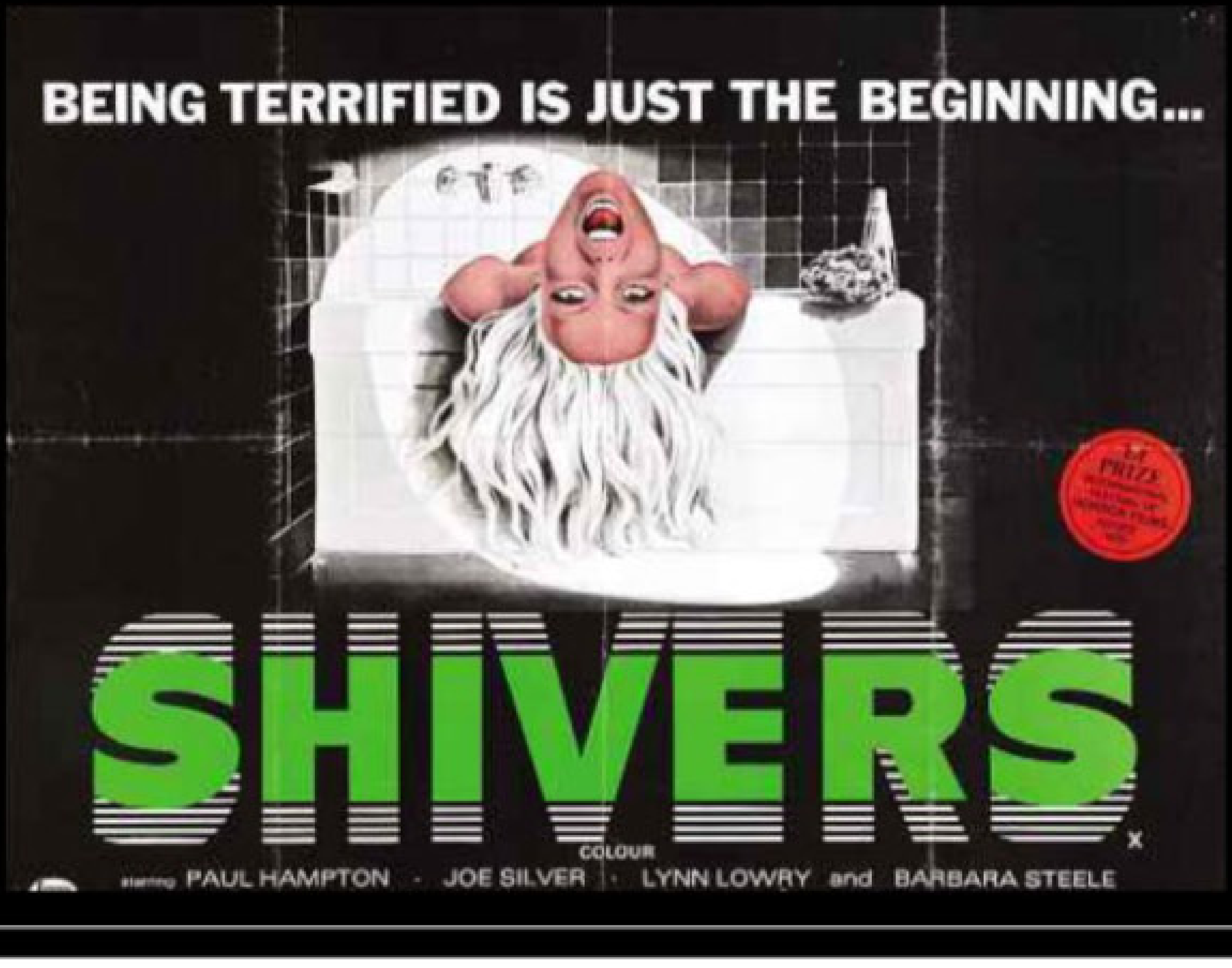
Some people think all horror is controversial, but this month we have three infamous movies that pushed boundaries that their contemporaries shied away from.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, best known of the bunch, still works as a gruelling terror experience. The set up – nice, clean, young people get brutalised by a dirty, unemployed, cannibal family – might sound overfamiliar today, but only because this is the flick that inspired all those imitators. It pushes some powerful buttons, not least urban middle class fears of what might happen if folksy backwoods types were suddenly in charge. The film feels nastier than it actually is, but that's a testament to its accomplishments as a piece of pure horror cinema, pitch perfect both visually and thematically. *Chainsaw* has been released multiple times, including on Blu-ray, but this 40th anniversary print is the best I've ever seen.

David Cronenberg would make a career of boundary-pushing with a series of controversial, mind bending movies, and it's great to see his earliest feature given the HD treatment. On paper, *Shivers* sounds like a porn version of *Night of the Living Dead*: Canadian apartment dwellers turn into crazed rapists after ingesting parasitical worms that look like rubber turds. No wonder the film was met with confused disgust by some tax payers (it was publicly funded in a plan to boost the Canadian film industry). But it's a brilliant exploration of sexuality and the constraints society places on it, with an ending that in any other director's hand would be played for horror or dread, but here it's presented as a fascinating moral question: would a world of zero sexual restraint be terrifying or just incredibly good fun? *Shivers* also has one of my favourite title sequences ever – a corporate slideshow of the 'exclusive' Starliner Apartments – which plays into my odd attraction to cold and synthetic looking architecture. I live near Milton Keynes; Cronenberg would love it here.

Last up, and looking great in HD, is the first movie ever to be rated 'V' for violence (though, along with a free vomit bag, that certificate was invented by the distributors). *Mark of the Devil* features a hefty-voiced Herbert Lom as a powerful church witchfinder who's idolised by his young apprentice Udo Kier. When the hypocrisy of their mission starts to become clear, Kier wonders who are really the ones marked by Satan. It's infamous for its graphic scenes of tortures (tongues ripped out, bare backsides pushed onto rusty nails; you get the picture) but there's more than just good old exploitation going on here. It's thought-provoking, well directed and has a decent script.

I attended a Bible Study last week and the first question was: "What's the last film you watched?" Proudly, I said, "*Mark of the Devil*…you know…the banned one." Though I doubt many churches are going to buy Arrow's excellent new edition, I still think it works as a powerful parable about the dangers of hypocrisy, whether religious, political or personal.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Fortean Times Verdict

CONTROVERSY IS THE VERY LIFEBLOOD OF HORROR: DISCUSS **9**

day: the train that takes Jan away after their brief meetings, the vehicle (literally) for the hard hurt of betrayal which hits Tom, and his harsh reaction to it, which ricochet back through time to affect Thomas and Macey.

Red Shift – "The further they go, the faster they leave" – is painful viewing. Every emotional betrayal, every breaking of trust, every cry of unfairness that we've all experienced is brought red-raw to the surface. This play hurts to watch; the last half hour is unremitting.

The DVD includes a fascinating 40-minute 1972 documentary in which Garner explores himself, his roots, his landscape, his influences and his compulsions. He talks about the violence within himself, and what he does with it: "The violence which is not externalising itself by crying or screaming, the bleeding inside my head, is going to be channelled, sifted, used". Other extras on the disc include an odd 19-minute travelogue through Cheshire narrated by a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost (Michael Hordern), and all-too-brief interviews with the play's editor and assistant director. The booklet includes several fascinating brief essays including one by Garner on the origins of *Red Shift*.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict
LONG OVERDUE RELEASE OF A GRUELLING TV MASTERPIECE **9**

The Double

Dir Richard Ayoade, UK 2014
Studiocanal, £12.99 (Blu-ray), £9.99 (DVD)

Former *IT Crowd* geek Richard Ayoade's follow-up to his debut feature *Submarine* is an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's early foray into long fiction of the same name. It was a book Dostoyevsky himself considered troublesome and a failure in terms of its formal identity. An apt novelistic irony for a story about a lowly clerk who begins to see a doppelgänger of himself; a double who is socially superior in every way and who begins to usurp his life socially and in the workplace, leading implacably to a nightmarish conclusion.

The Double wears the guise of other films which seek to capture the perseverating madness of office life: a dun, humdrum world of inhospitable corridors and workplace floors in which deep, low, madding machine hums fill otherwise maddening silences. No escape either way, then.

Jesse Eisenberg plays Simon, a programmer of computer software; the accompanying hardware will please computer aficionados from the 1980s who took to hugging their Commodores in bed at night instead of their girlfriends. Under-appreciated and unnoticed except when he is under the cosh, Kafka-like, for some misdemeanour at work he knows he didn't perpetrate, Simon suffers the pangs of unrequited love for his co-worker, Hannah (Mia Wasikowska), whom he mostly worships from afar with the help of the telescope which he uses to watch her in an adjacent apartment building. James, Simon's double, proceeds to bed Hannah, much to Simon's mounting torment.

Ayoade's depiction of the disaffection of urban, clerical life is painstakingly rendered. With shadowy flickerings in waste bin disposal rooms, gnomic scenes of inexplicable death and Wallace Shawn's ranting office manager, berating Simon like an errant schoolboy at every turn. The first 20 minutes consist of many close-ups of Eisenberg's pursed-lipped perplexity and this is indicative of a film which skirts the line between depicting a slowly realised ordeal and simply becoming one.

Just like Dostoevsky's original – an imitative, surreal Gogolesque foray by way of the psychological disturbance of Hoffmann's German Romanticism – Ayoade's *Double* never quite escapes reminders of similar films in such a setting: the earlier part of *Joe and the Volcano* springs to mind; as does the opening scene of *Stardust Memories,* with Allen in existential horror mode on the wrong train as Sharon Stone blows kisses from a parallel, oh-so-right, partying one. It's arguable that Allen encapsulates in a couple of minutes what *The Double* sort of does over 90 of them, but, ultimately, this is a witty, disturbing piece of cinema that invites you not just to watch but to go do some figuring.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
WITTY AND DISTURBING UPDATE OF DOSTOYEVSKY **8**

SHORTS

KIDNAPPED

Icon Home Entertainment, £12.99 (DVD)

No, not the Robert Louis Stevenson classic in one of its numerous screen outings, but a Spanish home invasion horror called (originally) *Sequestrados* that does nothing new or surprising but does it very well indeed. It's the usual set-up: a complacent bourgeois family under siege from vicious (in this case Albanian) psychos are forced to fight for their lives; no, it doesn't end well. Miguel Angel Vivas directs with skill and economy – smart camera set-ups, long takes and ingenious use of split screen – to create an effect of utter horror and desolation. If you fancy some utter horror and desolation, then this makes for an ideal night in. If you don't, then avoid it like the plague. **DS** 7/10

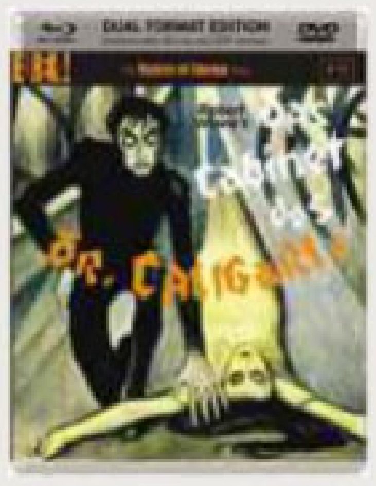
WOLFCOP

Studiocanal, £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

In an uncharacteristic mood of misplaced optimism I settled down to *Wolfcop* thinking that it might actually be that ultra-rarity, a good low-budget horror comedy. And, for about 30 minutes, it sort of is, setting up its *Fargo*-like small town milieu and eccentric characters effectively and amusingly enough. Lou Garou (geddit?) is possibly the world's worst policeman, a lazy, lecherous drunken no-hoper who's always in trouble with the sheriff and consistently outshone by his female colleague (Amy Matysio, the best thing in the film). Lou's half-hearted investigation into a recent murder takes on a new lease of life when he is transformed into a werewolf by local occultists – a change that makes him not just a hairy monster but a far more efective and dedicated law enforcement officer into the bargain. I'd have thought there was plenty of scope for comedy with such a set-up – and *Wolfcop* mines it effectively for a while – but instead the film-makers contrive an over-complicated and frankly incomprehensible hotch-potch involving drug gangs, centuries-old shapeshifters and werewolf sex. The film does feature enjoyably old-school special effects, including the first lycanthropic transformation scene that starts with the victim's penis; but that's not necessarily a point in its favour. **DS** 5/10

THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI

Eureka!, £16.99 (Dual Format Edition)



One could argue that all horror movies find their ultimate blue (or should that be black?) print in one unnerving and twisted German film made in 1920. In Robert Wiene's silent classic, a strange doctor frightens audiences at an annual German fair with a disturbing exhibit: a fluttery-eyed cadaver-man who has never woken up – ever. When the Somnambulist's prophecies of death come true, scared locals wonder if the occult is at work or just plain old murder. In the (sadly) unlikely event that a friend asks you "What's this German Expressionism all about then?" you should show them this gorgeous, newly restored (and extra-packed) HD transfer. Warped, angular sets and whacked-out perspectives ensure that the film creates the constant effect of a waking nightmare. It's short-sighted to suggest, as some have done, that Tim Burton is the only modern director to be really influenced by this stuff. The shadow of *Caligari* is far wider, deeper and darker than that. **Rev PL** 9/10

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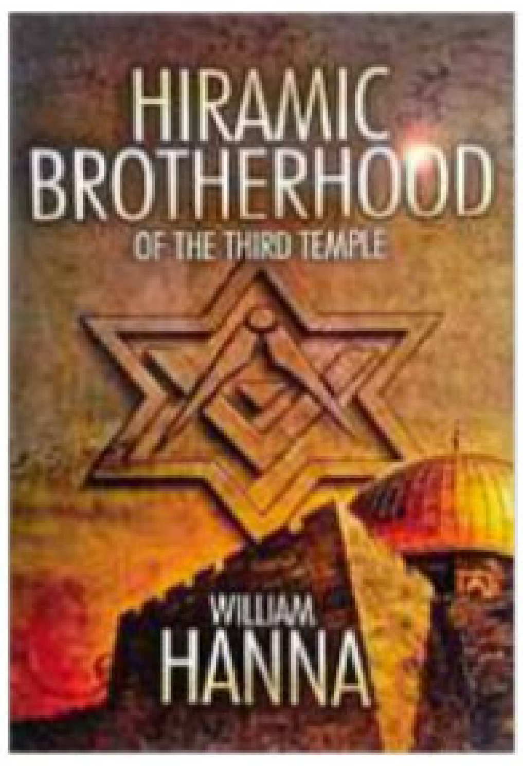
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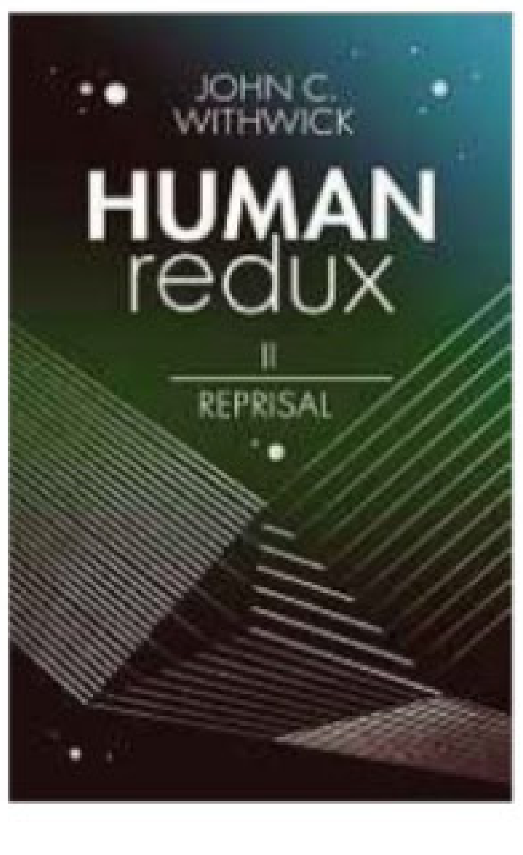
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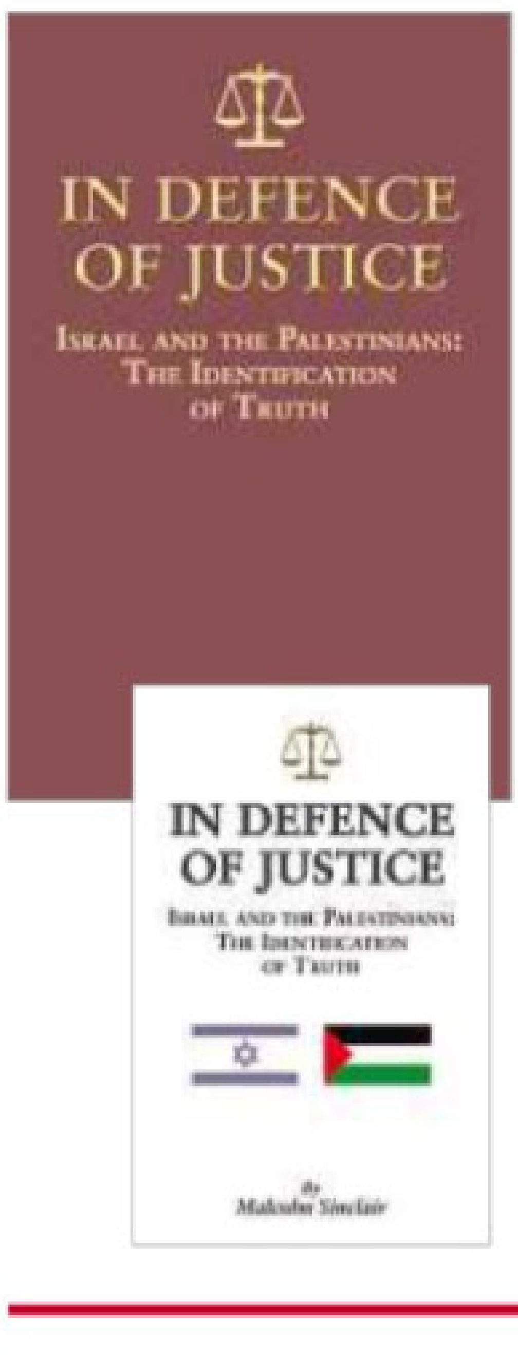
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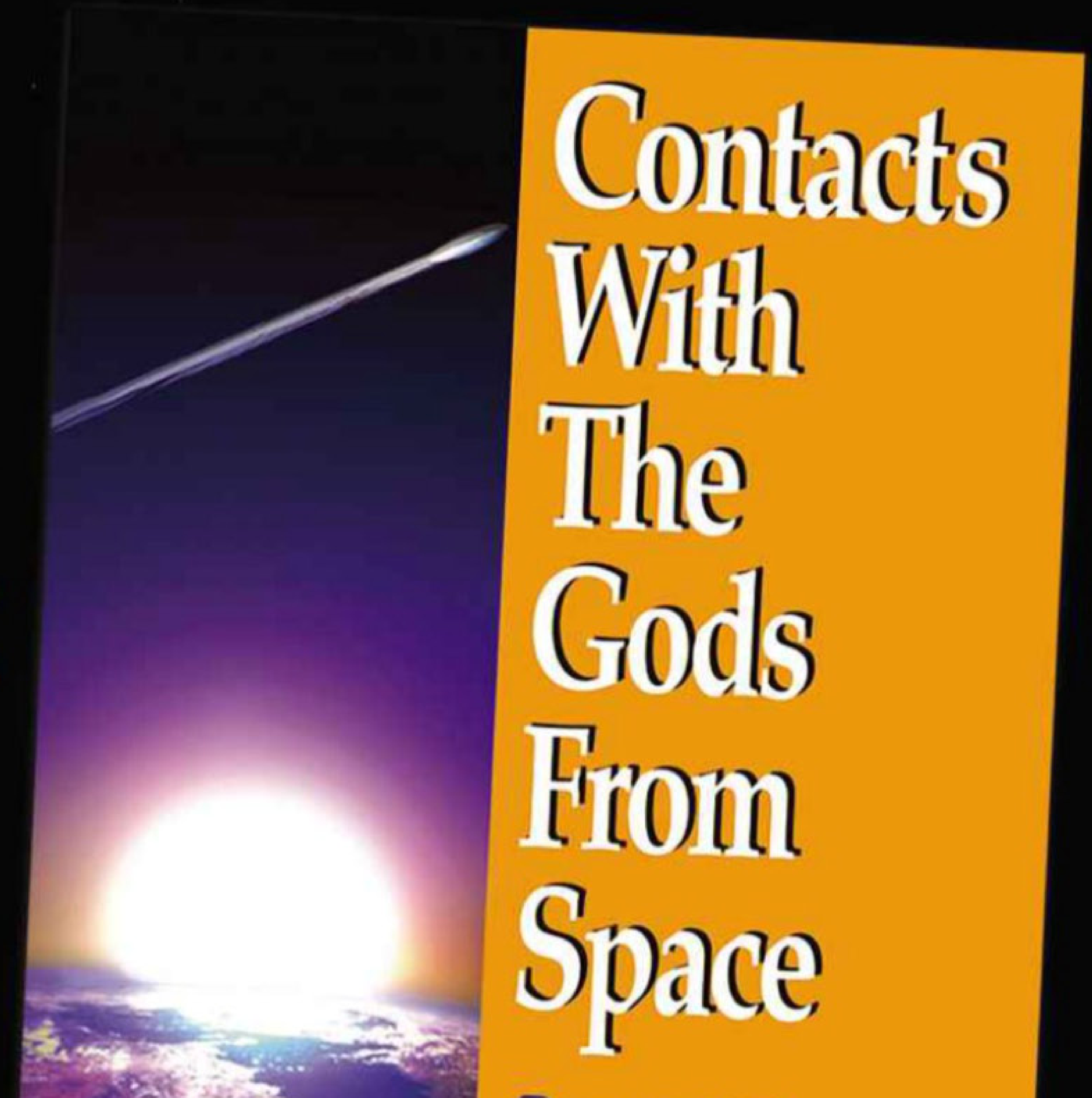
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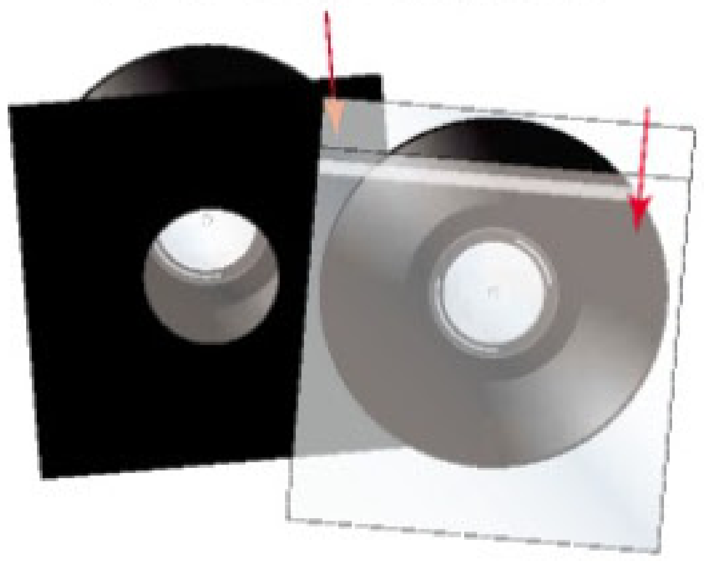

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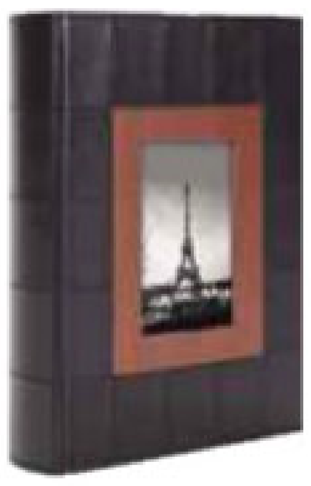

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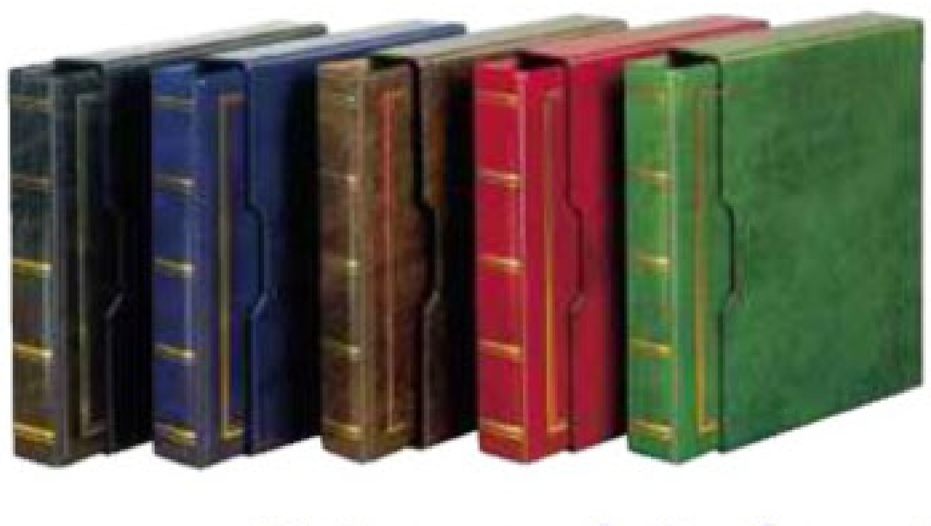

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Dear FT...

letters

Lucky heads

In regard to foundation sacrifices [**FT316:54-55**]: while on holiday in Tunisia in August 1988, I visited Carthage and got talking to someone in the oil industry who had worked in various countries, including Brunei, where the Sultan was having some large building constructed. The local population believed that the foundations were going to have human heads put into them to bring the building good luck (or something similar). These would presumably be obtained from unwilling victims. Whether this had any truth in it or not, people believed it to the point that the national price of rice went up because people were stockpiling it. This was to minimise having to go out shopping for food and therefore reducing the risk of abduction whilst you were out and being decapitated to have your head put into the foundations.

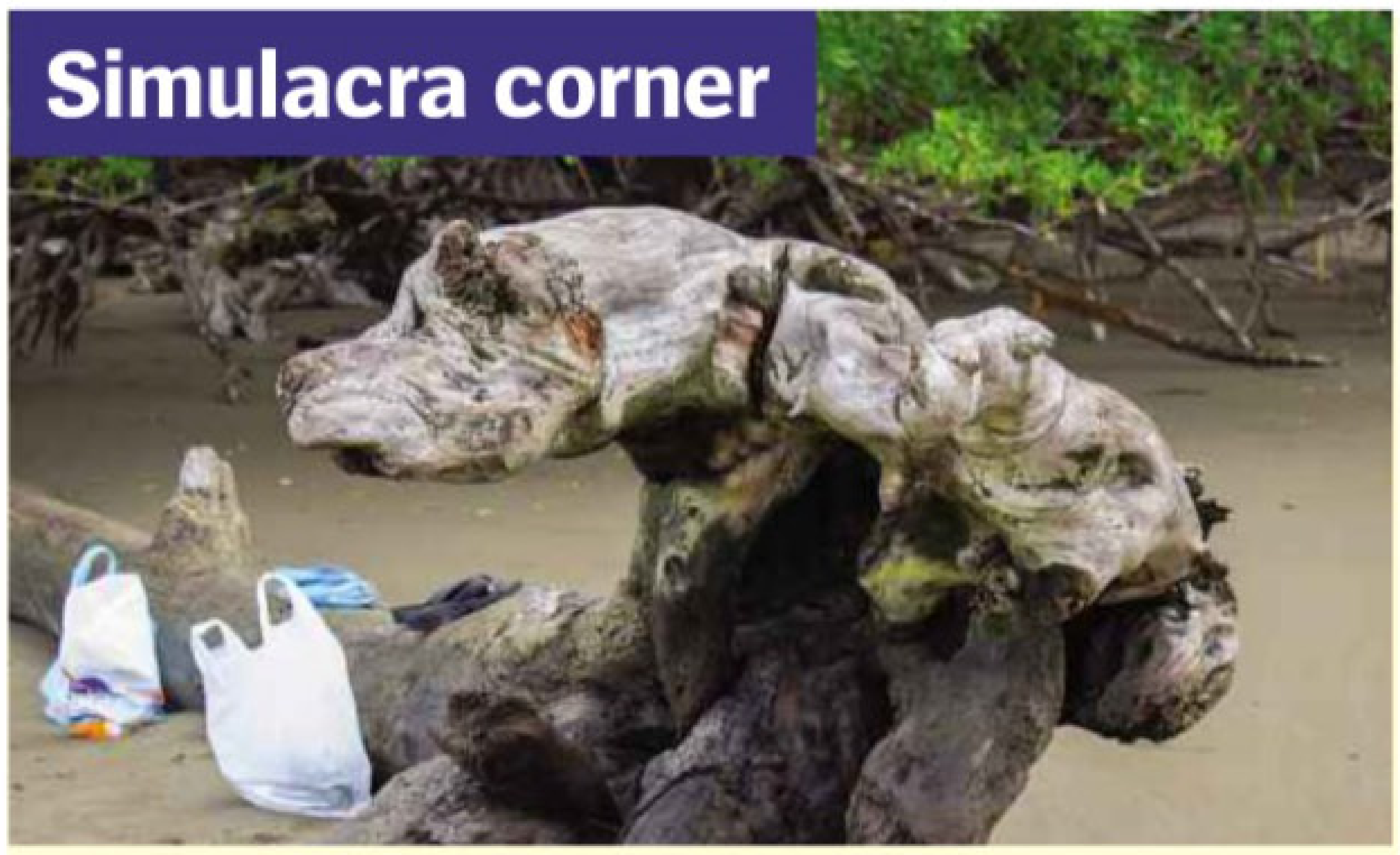
Gary Stocker
By email

Rubbish art

Mythchaser asks whether there is any truth in the oft-told tale about a modern work of art destroyed by a cleaner because s/he thought it crap [**FT317:23**]. According to the well-referenced Wikipedia entry on the famous German artist Joseph Beuys, this happened twice to works by him. He once used a baby's bathtub and put medical dressing material on it. The work was first exhibited in 1968 or 1969 in the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and later transferred to Leverkusen to be displayed at an exhibition in Morsbroich Palais. It was stored in a basement until the exhibition opened, but on 3 November 1973 the local Social Democrats had a party in the museum and two women helping were looking for a basin to wash dirty glasses in. They got a key to the basement, took the basin, cleaned it of its dressing material and used it as common sense seemed to dictate. It caused a scandal: the owner of the work of art brought an action and was awarded about 60,000 Marks (some £20,000) in compensation. Beuys later recreated the work, using the original basin. More recent is the fate of Beuys's Fat Corner, which was stored in his studio in the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf, but removed and thrown away by the maintenance man in 1986. In Germany, whenever there is talk of modern art and someone says: "I could do that myself, but no one would pay me a million for it", these incidents are mentioned, as they are well known.

Ulrich Magin
Hennef, Germany

Simulacra corner



Corey Chimko noticed this piece of driftwood on a recent trip to Playa Ballena, Uvita, Costa Rica – and thought it looked like a dog or bear in profile. The Gang of Fort also spies a smaller dog perched by its left shoulder.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.

Dead-icated

There was a 1980s tradition going around the Greater London Council in its last days that there was a windowless basement "photocopying section" to which particularly useless staff members were exiled, to do photocopying all day. The same legend says that there were comings and goings around a particular photocopier over a few days, and it wasn't till one of the people was about to leave one day that they noticed a guy who appeared to be leaning up against the wall near one photocopier that was churning out a particularly big run of photocopies, apparently waiting for the run to finish. One particularly eagle-eyed worker, by the standards of a demotivated workforce who couldn't care less, eventually spotted that he wasn't moving. He'd been dead, standing up against the wall (leaning against a radiator in the version I heard), his body kept warm by the heat from the photocopier and the radiator. Various photocopying jobsworths had come and gone and just assumed he was working on a particularly big photocopying job all those days.

The story was told me in the tone of some sort of example of how dysfunctional bits of the GLC had become.

Matt Salusbury
London

Great whites

Roberts and Clarke note that the silly season results in "ludicrous stories about... great white sharks that lurk off the Cornish coast" [**FT319:26**]. However, the stories are far from ludicrous: indeed, the real issue is more why *Carcharodon carcharias* isn't as much a part of Cornish summers as ice cream, rain, and accountants and civil servants trying to emulate Kelly Slater on belly boards bought from beach-side arcades.

As shark expert Richard Peirce remarks in his excellent *Sharks in British Seas* (Shark Cornwall 2008), there are several reports from UK waters where there is "a high probability" that the Great White was involved. Furthermore, Peirce notes, conditions in British waters "are broadly similar to those where large resident populations flourish, such as South Africa, Southern Australia, and California". (I'd add the parts of the eastern seaboard of the USA and Canada to that list.) And *C carcharias* can cover large distances: one female Great White travelled more than 13,000 miles (21,000km) from South Africa to Western Australia, Peirce remarks. The nearest confirmed capture of a Great White was in northern Bay of Biscay – a mere 168 nautical miles (311km) off Land's End.

However, Peirce notes, the species has declined by about 80 per cent. Studies published since his 2008 book, thankfully, show encouraging signs that this iconic and, biologically at least, beautiful creature may be more abundant than previously estimated. So perhaps *C carcharias* will take more transatlantic holidays in the future.

Whether you feel it's probable or highly likely that Great White sharks visit British waters, it's hardly a silly season story.

Mark Greener
Cambridge

Toking spinach

Mythchaser [**FT319:23**] mentioned how the Popeye comic strip's endorsement of spinach was based on a scientific error. According to an article in *High Times*, the error was based on a euphemism used for marijuana around the time of Popeye's creation: "spinach". The article went into all the, ah, mythconceptions about pot-smokers held at that time.

K Alan McDougall
Victoria, British Columbia

letters

Butterfly portent

My son is married to a Vietnamese girl and in 2007 her mother died. The family gathered in Vietnam for the funeral and, as is the custom, the body was laid out in a coffin for people to pay their respects. My daughter-in-law told my son that her mother's spirit was still with them and would depart when a black butterfly came to the house and then left.

My son was sceptical but made no comment. However, the day before the funeral a black butterfly did fly into the house and settled on the wall above the bed in which the deceased lady had slept. It remained there until the day of the funeral and then flew away. My son told me that all this happened as predicted – the story was not told in hindsight and he had witnessed the event. Apparently, the Vietnamese people present accepted this as quite normal.

PJ Gilbert
Coventry

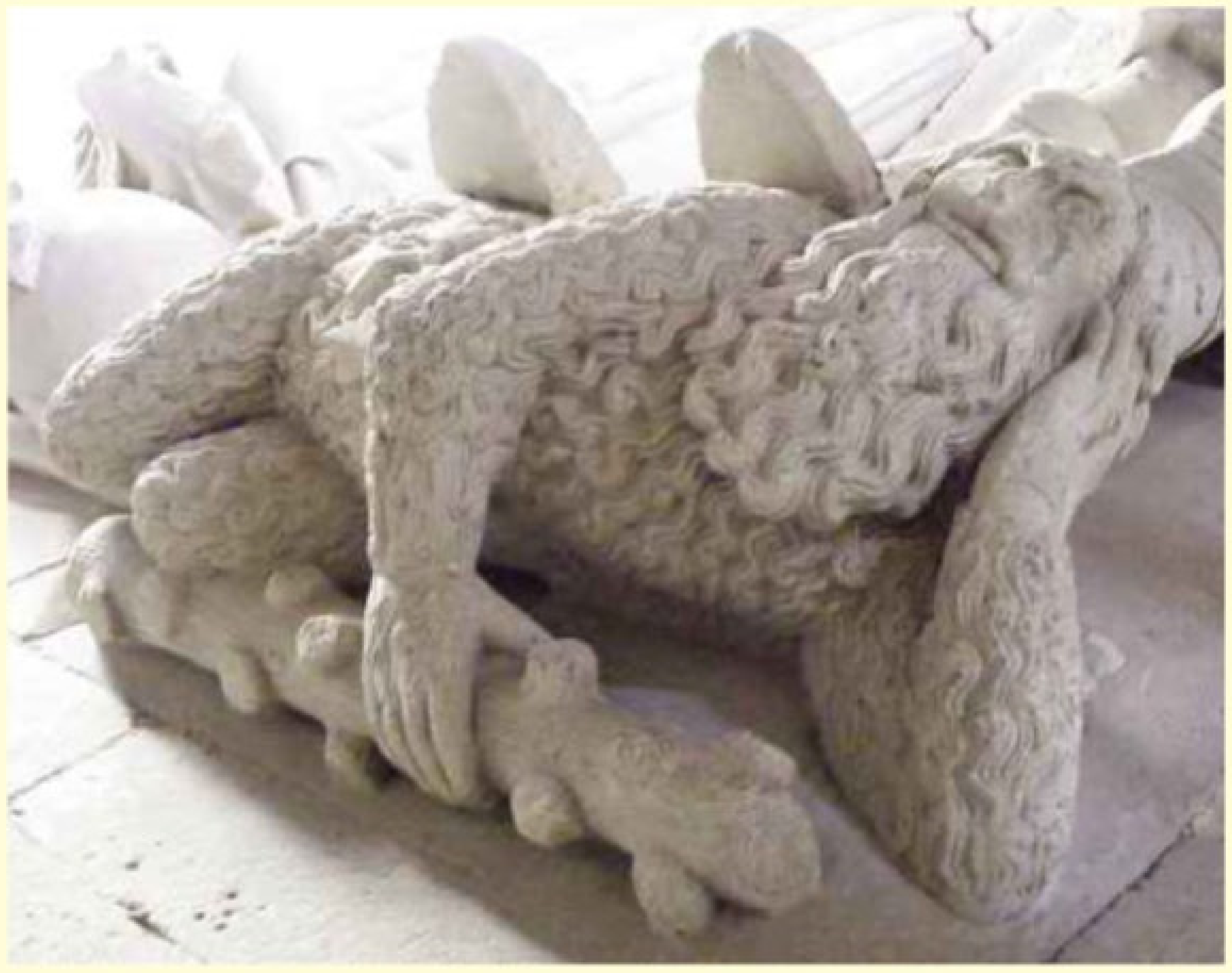
Woodwoses

Following Matt Salusbury's article on the woodwoses of Suffolk [**FT318:28-33**], I must share this lovely carving of a woodwose from the tomb of Sir Robert Whittingham (d. 1471) in the church of St John The Baptist in the village of Aldbury in Hertfordshire.

A flick through my old copy of *Debrett's Illustrated Peerage* finds 28 heraldic coats-of-arms bearing supporting woodwoses or non-club-bearing 'savages', as well as the much rarer wild women, and club-bearing mermen. The wildman cult was also prevalent amongst the nobility in mediæval Germany and France. On 28 January 1393, five nobles including Charles VI of France were accidentally set alight while capering dressed as woodwoses for the *Bal des Ardents* (Ball of the Burning Men). They all died, save Charles, thanks to his aunt who smothered his flames with her skirts.

As with the Suffolk carvings, the woodwose in high society seems to have reached England in the 15th century. I wonder if this has less to do with memories of actual 'wildmen' than it does with the huge expansion in church-building that was still taking place then, necessitating skilled artisans, often sourced from itinerants. In this sense, some of these woodwoses might have symbolised the very artists who carved them: unsettled, wide-roaming men, seeking patrons. The club or ragged staff is a common motif in mediæval church graffiti to denote travellers, after St Christopher, who carries one in contemporary iconography.

Jerry Glover
Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire



Vampire kits

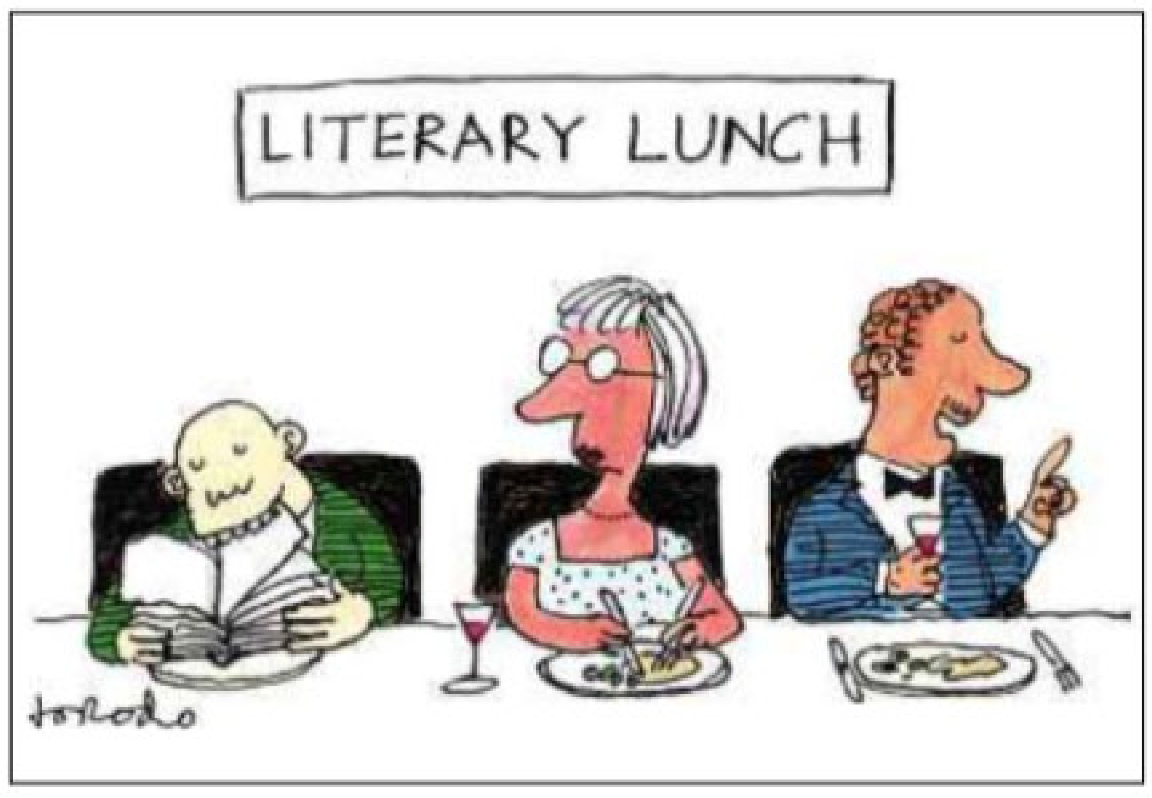
I was amused to note, in David V Barrett's review of the recent Vampire Symposium held at Goldsmiths College [**FT315:14-15**], the phrase "of the hundred or so vampire killing kits in existence". How could anyone make such an assessment?

If in the past there ever were such things as vampire hunters' kits (which I seriously doubt), then they might still be objects of utility or at least family pride, handed down the generations and (for more reasons than one) not displayed to outsiders. If, on the other hand, the kits that come up for sale or exhibition now are, in fact, just modern compendia of the sort of vintage weapons and herbal remedies that Van Helsing might have carried, then dozens of people might be putting them together at this moment, with a view to turning a fast buck. How could you hope to count or even vaguely assess the numbers?

I'm writing this in the light of a recent visit to Tynemouth Market, where one of the stallholders told me she had been approached by a young woman who apparently "made" vampire hunting kits and who asked if she would be willing to sell them on her stall. I very much doubt that these would have included genuine antique guns, but one can imagine with ease how simple it would be to put together the other, suitably "vintaged" elements of Bible, stake, holy water, herbs, perhaps a few poignant old photos… As yet there has been no sight of them, but if they're going to be available under such circumstances then they may prove to be a commodity in plentiful supply.

I have speculated myself (in a purely fictional context) about the means and motive of their creation – see my story "More Fun than a Vampire Hunting Kit" in *His Red Eyes Again: a selection of vampire tales to celebrate the 40th anniversary of The Dracula Society* (publ. CreateSpace, 2013.)

Gail-Nina Anderson
Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne



JORODO

Science/scientism

Nils Erik Grande's musings about science [**FT316:69**] seem a little confused. First he suggests that a dogma of 'hard' scientism is that science will eventually explain everything; second, that a dogma of evolutionary science is that Man has no special place – "we are just a transient species that appeared as a result of random circumstances". He then suggests that "it is clear that analytical intelligence increases with evolutionary sophistication", and gives examples (chimp smarter than dog, dog smarter than rat, etc). Finally he suggests that "scientism says, in effect, that ours is the only intelligence *without* limits" and that "we are in fact the godlike 'crown of creation' that evolutionary science dogmatically tells us we are not". He notes that the two viewpoints cannot both be right, so we have a paradox.

In fact, the paradox is a result of a fallacy rather then a conflict between alleged 'dogmas'. For a start, the first 'dogma' simply doesn't support his conclusion that scientism says that ours is the only intelligence without limits. Quite apart from the facile observation that we don't know what other intelligent species might be 'out there', there are other aspects to intelligence besides the ability to use science to understand our Universe. For instance, we use imagination and mathematics to come up with and support our scientific explanations; suggesting that science will explain these gets you into an uncomfortable circular argument.

Mr Grande compounds the problem by suggesting that analytical intelligence increases with evolutionary sophistication without defining either term or relating them to what evolution is really about – viz. 'fitness'. Of course it is likely that intelligence has played a major role in the questionable 'success' of humans, but a high intelligence is not a prerequisite for evolutionary fitness. If we take the longevity of a species as a measure of evolutionary success, then many creatures have outdone *Homo sapiens* by a good measure.

Ron Gardner
Ludlow, Shropshire

In response to Nils Grande's letter – and somewhat in sympathy with his main point – I'd like to add that I have never met an actual scientist who believed humans would one day solve all mysteries and answer all possible questions. That claim is the preserve of religion, esotericism and the occult. There is no ultimate comfort to be found in true science, only hard work and the thrill of endeavour. The fact that scientists still *try* in the face of the limitations of our intelligence and our vantage point on this planet is entirely commendable. We might never answer the hardest, most profound questions of existence, but let's give them a jolly good crack and see how far we get. I mean – what else is there to do?

Ryan Shirlow
Leeds, West Yorkshire

Haunted staircase

Further to Ian l'Anson's letter ["Localised hauntings", **FT315:73**], I have recently come across a case of an object allegedly being haunted, even though it had been removed from its original location. The staircase down which Mary Queen of Scots is said to have walked to her execution at Fotheringhay Castle in February 1587 is reputed to be haunted by her, according to Joyce Miller and Martin Coventry in *Mary Queen of Scots and All her Ghosts* (2013). However, as the authors make clear, Fotheringhay Castle was demolished some time after Mary's death, apparently on the orders of her son James VI and I. Material from the castle, including the staircase, is said to have been used in building what is now in the Talbot Hotel at Oundle, and Mary's ghost is said to appear here.

Rosalind Johnson
Downton, Wiltshire

Vanishing angel hair

While enjoying *Chronicles of the Strange and Uncanny in Florida* by Greg Jenkins, I learned that the collecting crew of the Miami Seaquarium were inundated by 'angel hair' while in the Florida Keys in 1957. Curator Craig Philips gathered the 'spider web-like' filaments that coated the Seaquarium's boat and placed them in mason jars, but when they returned to the laboratory in Miami, it was gone – not a trace! This incident was investigated by the US Air Force *Project Blue Book*.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

Decorated Bollinger

Did the Bollinger family demand to have all war graves moved from their grounds – and thus get their champagne shunned by soldiers? [Bolly boycott, **FT318:72**]. I haven't been able to find *anything* on this except the question asked in an Internet forum and then in FT. It appears to be a mythconception. For what it's worth, the Bollinger family had at least one decorated warrior among them: "After being demobbed in 1919, Jacques Bollinger was rewarded with the Legion of Honour and a Croix de Guerre, then succeeded to the helm of the firm after the death of his father in 1918."

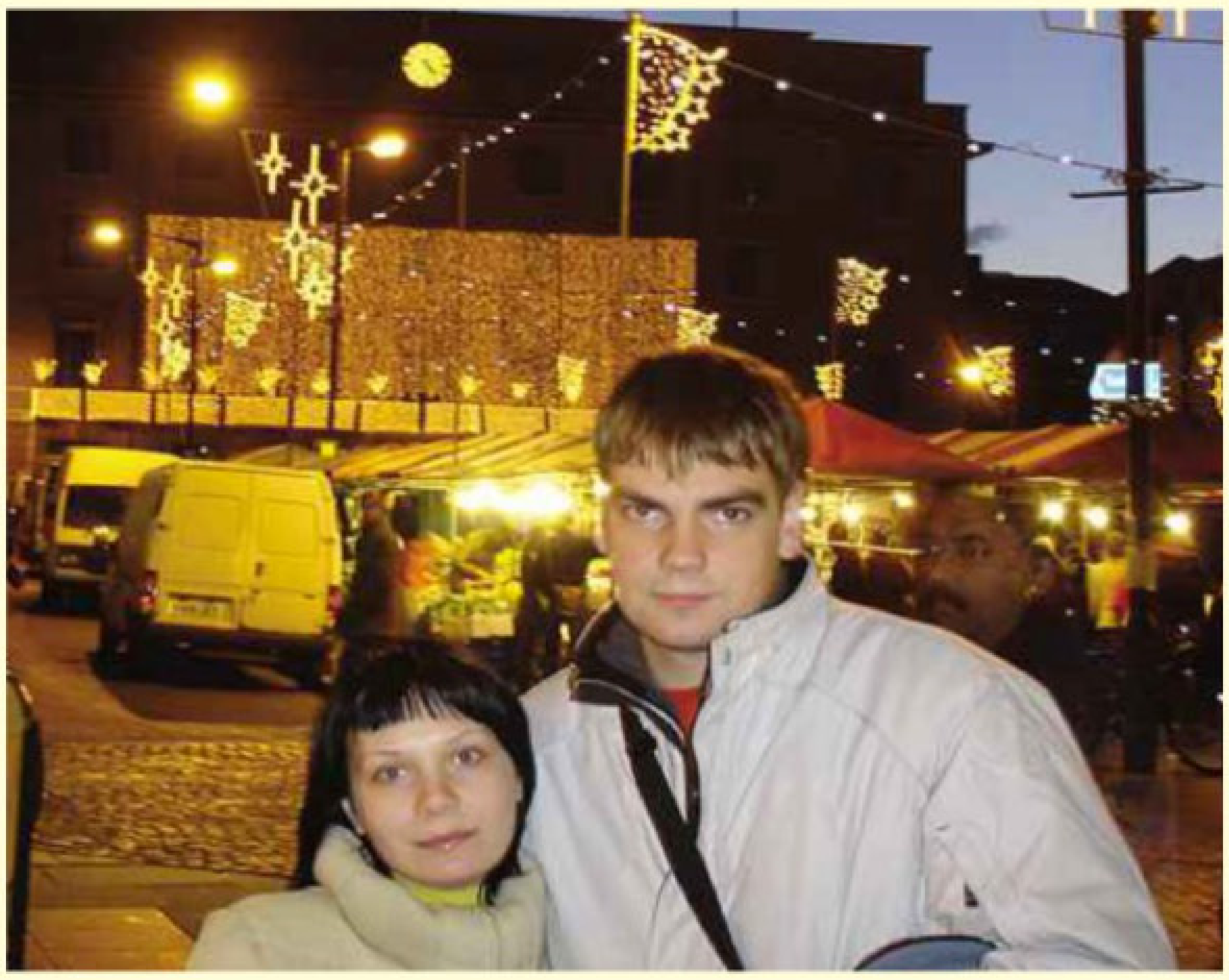
Peter Olausson
Sweden

Forced conversion

Your referred to the depredations of the ISIL (formerly ISIS and IS) jihadists in Iraq and touched on the subject of forced conversions [**FT318:2**]. This practice, apart from the obvious human rights objections, has always struck me as being counter-productive, to put it mildly. During the First Crusade (late 11th century), an Armenian convert, Firouz, a former Christian, surreptitiously helped the Crusaders to enter the key city of Antioch and thereby did a great deal of damage to the Saracen cause. Arguably, this early success enabled the Crusaders to remain in the Holy Land for a considerable time. The Jewish Hasmoneans (late 2nd, early 1st century BC) forcibly converted some neighbouring Idumæans to Judaism but lived to regret it when they were tyrannised by King Herod, a descendant of one of the converts.

Christianity too was not immune from this odious practice, such as in 15th century Spain, where many Jews were forcibly converted. Presumably, in the case of forced conversion, the converter has two choices. He either trusts the converts to knuckle down and become good Muslims/Christians/etc or he assumes that they cannot be trusted and will need to be watched. Since forced conversion is unlikely to engender immediate loyalty, it is a fair bet that most converters will err on the side of caution and follow the latter course. However, depending on how many people you convert, this could easily lead to an unwieldy and prohibitively expensive Stasi-style bureaucracy. So if there is a logic to forced conversions, it is one that perhaps only a religious fanatic can perceive.

Geoff Clifton
Solihull, West Midlands



Night scene

Looking at Ivan Sharp's photograph of Cambridge Market [**FT319:74**], I'm pretty sure I know what happened, and sadly the explanation is quite mundane. Modern digital cameras have a "night scene" setting that takes a long exposure to capture background lighting, but also fires the flash to illuminate the subject close to the camera and show it sharp, without blurring.

From the look of the photograph, this is what was used here; the flare of light from the stall behind the couple indicates that the shutter was open for some time, but the man and woman are clearly lit by a flash. They were close enough to the camera to be illuminated properly. They also weren't moving, so they obscure what's behind them for the remainder of the exposure.

Light intensity drops off according to an inverse square law, and built-in camera flashes aren't that powerful to start with. As he was further away, the man behind them is not so well illuminated by the momentary light of the flash going off. More to the point, as he's walking past, the lights that he obscured at the moment of the flash are recorded during the rest of the exposure and he appears to be transparent.

I've taken photos with the same result – and by setting the camera to a really long exposure, with a separate flashgun, a dark background, and a bit of planning you can have fun taking photographs of people standing next to themselves.

Chris Harris
Charfield, Gloucestershire

letters

Making smoke rings

Further to the article on mystery rings [**FT315:23-23**], I was an explosives expert with the Australian Federal Police and on one training exercise, [7 May 1990] set off an explosion involving a 44-gallon drum of petrol. The ensuing fireball being channelled up through the weakest point (the lid of the drum) resulted in a perfect black smoke ring. The drum is clearly visible in the first photo. The same effect can be obtained using black powder and a mortar (i.e. fireworks) as the mortar channels the smoke into the same shape.

Michael C Stevenson
Australian Federal Police
Bomb Squad (retired)

Cotton and oil

Burt Gray-Malkin's letter entitled "Hazardous rags" [**FT318:72**] reminded me of an article in the Victorian weekly *Leisure Hour*, dated 24 January 1856, entitled "Spontaneous Combustion". I will summarise the main points.

Newspapers in the past often mentioned "conflagrations" also known as Spontaneous Combustion events. These were often caused by innocuous substances which when brought together were fraught with danger. Cotton, when "wetted with oil speedily takes fire". It was well known how difficult, almost impossible, it is to prevent the escape of oil from casks; and yet, the slightest quantity of this liquid issuing from between the staves upon cotton might produce combustion.

An incident is described in detail: Mr Golding, of the East India Company, had left a bottle of oil on a table beside a chest filled with coarse cotton. The bottle was overturned during the night (possibly by rats). It broke on the lid of the chest and the oil penetrated the cottons. When the chest was opened next morning the cotton was found burning and partially consumed, while the chest itself was about to burst into flames. No trace of inflammable material was found. Mr Golding talked with a "brother official" who had studied chemical works written by others in which spontaneous combustion had been detailed. As an experiment, a piece of cotton was doused with linseed oil, which began to smoke after being locked in a box for three hours.

In 1781 a Russian ship based at Kronstadt suddenly burst into flames. There had been no fires at that place for five years. The Empress issued orders for the Academy of St Petersburg to investigate. It seems that "soot proceeding from vegetable substance – pine tree soot and other from trees with resin – when wetted with hemp oil is liable to spontaneously combust". This is not the case with soot from animal sources.

In 1757 the sail magazine at Brest was entirely consumed in consequence of heaping waxed cloths upon one another, which had been painted on one side and dried in the sun.

There are many other instances quoted: papermakers ensure that piles of rags in factories are not allowed to become "unduly heated"; the danger of damp or wet hay has dangers which many farmers are aware of; wheat when stacked in damp conditions can also combust; mention of spontaneous combustion plus an explosion took place at a flour magazine in Turin; and various incidents with wool storage.

This brings me to wonder if the more recent incident of a baby spontaneously combusting in India could be due to his body being oiled and then covered with cotton? We also regularly put oil on our bodies, including that of babies.

Carol Noble
Burnopfield, Co Durham

I was working on board a cruise ship in 1996-97 when we had a small fire on board. Some towels, just dry-cleaned, spontaneously caught fire. I was told that this can happen due to the chemicals used still heating up the towels when they were put into the store cupboard.

David Lee
Sturmer, Essex

Royal scandal

I read with great interest the recent articles on British Voodoo [**FT316:28-35, 317:42-47**]. One of the figures who gets a brief mention really deserves more extensive coverage. Dr Alexander Cannon may have had a much more malign affect on British society than Crowley's antics ever managed: namely, he may have brought down a king.

Cannon's early days in Hong Kong where he became medical officer in charge of prisons instigated his more serious studies of the occult which were further deepened by his travels in Tibet and India. Returning to the UK, he became a sort of early version of a New Age healer, treating mainly alcohol, stress and sexual problems. King Edward VIII consulted him for probably all three difficulties and when word leaked out it caused a furore in the establishment led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. "KING EDWARD IN THE GRIP OF THE LEADER OF BLACK MAGIC IN ENGLAND" blasted one headline. It could be argued that this was even worse publicity for Edward than the Wallace Simpson affair.

Crowley at least was loyal and attempted to contribute to the ensuing war effort positively by dressing up as the Prime Minister and perhaps inventing the V for victory finger gesture used by Churchill. Cannon on the other hand ensconced himself in Ballamore Castle on the Isle of Man and dressed flamboyantly in a flowing cape with huge wing collars. It was during this time that his phone was bugged by MI5 as he was suspected of passing information about British military manoeuvres and camps to the Nazis. The local museum on the Isle still displays some of his "magical apparatus". After the war he performed a live magic show and lived with his two extremely glamorous assistants, the sisters Joyce and Rhonda Deronda.

Prof Ian Charles Scott
Brooklyn, New York

Julia Thomas

In Part Two of his London 'Murder Houses' article [**FT319:30-38**], Jan Bondeson mentions the gruesome killing of Julia Thomas at her home in Richmond, Surrey. She was murdered by her maid and her body cut up and boiled in a kitchen copper. Although the house does not seem to have been haunted after this horror, there is a curious postscript. The maid, Kate Webster, hid some of the body parts – allegedly after trying to sell some of the rendered fat as lard to neighbours – in a box and dumped them in the Thames. The remains were discovered washed down the river by Barnes Bridge, minus several body parts, and the head.

In 2010 the naturalist and TV personality David Attenborough was having his house on Richmond Hill extended into part of a disused pub which he had bought, when workmen unearthed a skull underneath the old pub foundations. A coroner's enquiry in 2011 determined that the skull was that of Julia Thomas and recorded a verdict of unlawful killing, through asphyxiation and head injury, consistent with details of the deceased's injuries revealed by Webster, along with low collagen levels as a result of the boiling.

John Rimmer
London

it happened to me...

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Expectation fulfilled

Reading the article on Reality Blinks [**FT315:27**] reminded me of something that happened to me in my late twenties, over 15 years ago. I worked as an Assistant Manager in a 24-hour snooker hall in Derbyshire. Around 3.30am I got a call from the night manager saying the fire alarm was going off. I could hear the bell in the background. I told him to evacuate the building and I would be right in. I lived about 10 minutes' drive from the venue and jumped in my car.

As I drove into the street it was silent. If the fire alarm was going off it should have woken up the whole neighbourhood. The club's front entrance was between two glass-fronted shops forming a small glass alcove leading to the door. Walking down the street I could see the night manager through the glass at the top of a couple of stairs. He was looking at me as I approached, with his hand on the door handle – expressionless, motionless and silent. When I got closer, maybe 15-20ft (4.6–6m) away, he grew hazy and disappeared, like a special effect in a film. I didn't feel scared and carried on. As the shop sides and the front door were made of glass, it was not possible for someone to enter the door without me seeing.

For security, the front door was always locked as the night managers worked on their own. I pressed the intercom and the staff member let me in through the glass door. There where many, maybe eight, flights of stairs, winding up to the bar area. A large windowed hatch let the night manager see me reach the top of the stairs and buzz me in through another locked door. I could hear a bell going off and it turned out he had pressed a panic button, which in those days wasn't linked to a police station. As he knew he had caused the bell ringing he hadn't bothered to evacuate. Even though I knew he hadn't just been downstairs, I asked him if he had been, and of course he answered no.

This actually made me more sceptical about supernatural events. I was convinced I was tired and my mind saw what it expected to see: the night manager standing outside. But it did make me more willing to believe people when they say they have seen something. I just believe the mind plays tricks.

Lyn McGarrity
By email

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

Wandering stud

About 20 years ago, while trudging through Pakistan in the direction of K2, I bought for myself a rather fetching cotton shalwar kameez. It came with a diamond (alright, glass) collar stud. When I arrived home in Blackwood, Gwent, the stud had disappeared. Late last year, I moved house to Caerphilly. Next door is having some building work done, so last night [11 May 2014] I was picking through the rubble looking for something worth rescuing, and came upon the missing stud, placed tidily on a plank.

Viv Hobbs
Energlyn Park, Caerphilly

Double-take

On two occasions recently, I have noticed cars coming from the opposite direction, only to have the same car with the same occupants go past me again further down the road. The first experience took place mid-afternoon as I drove home from work along a winding stretch of road in rural Victoria, Australia. I noticed that a station wagon coming from the opposite direction was of a model that hadn't proved popular with car buyers here in Australia. The model of vehicle has two small headlights mounted side by side on each side of the grill. These looked out of proportion on what is a fairly large car and I'm pretty sure that feature is what had made it unpopular with buyers. As the car approached, I saw that the driver was wearing what appeared to be white bib overalls. The back of the wagon appeared to be stuffed with paint cans and drop cloths. I then passed the same car again about 10 or 15 minutes later and six miles [10km] down the road. There are no roads or tracks in the area that would allow the driver to double-back to a point ahead of where we'd originally passed without him having to travel many miles and a considerably longer period of time taking place. It was the same station wagon with the two small headlights on each side of the front grill, the same driver and the same painter's gear in the back.

> "I stopped at another set of traffic lights, only to see the same car and the same women..."

About two weeks later, I was on my way home again and was sitting waiting for the lights to change at a major junction on a main road in the suburbs of Melbourne. I noticed a couple of women in a large black 4x4 facing me across the intersection. The driver was having an animated conversation with her companion and was waving her hands around and banging the steering wheel for emphasis; her companion was nodding her head in agreement with whatever the driver was saying. I could see them both clearly as we sat waiting for the lights to change. The driver had dark shoulder length hair, while her companion's hair was short and blonde. Both of them were wearing large sunglasses.

About five minutes and a few miles down the road, I stopped at another set of traffic lights, only to see the same car and the same women seemingly carrying on their conversation, with the driver waving her hands and banging the steering wheel directly across the intersection from me. Again there is no way they could have reached that point in the road, miles ahead (of me) and behind (to them) where I'd seen them in the first place. This was in stop-start traffic; the suburban streets wouldn't allow the vehicle to have cut back through side streets to the point I encountered them for the second time in the interval between sightings.

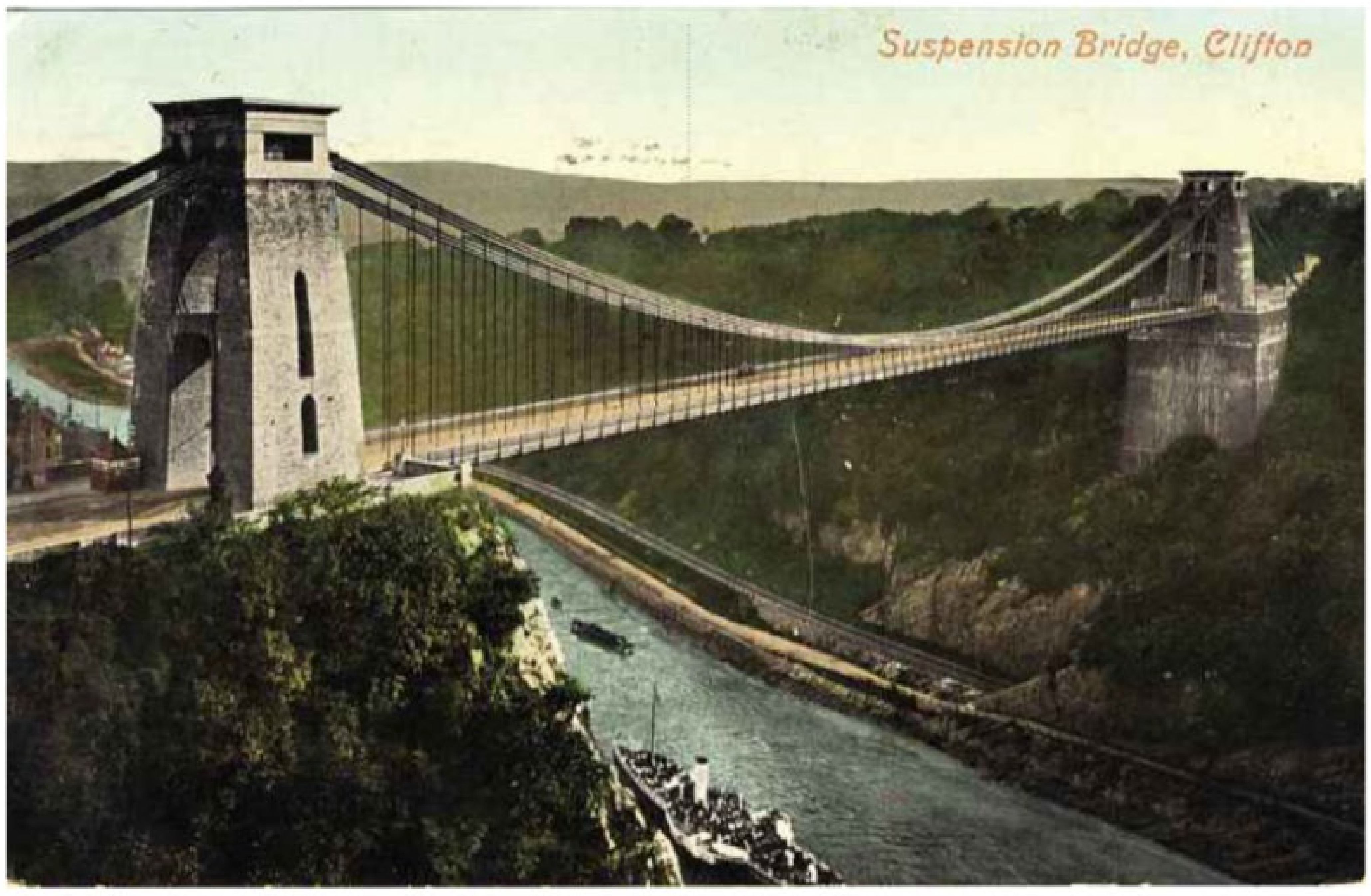
I didn't have the feeling of déjà vu during these episodes, but it did seem to me at the time that film had slipped slightly forward or backward on the loop of the projector somehow.

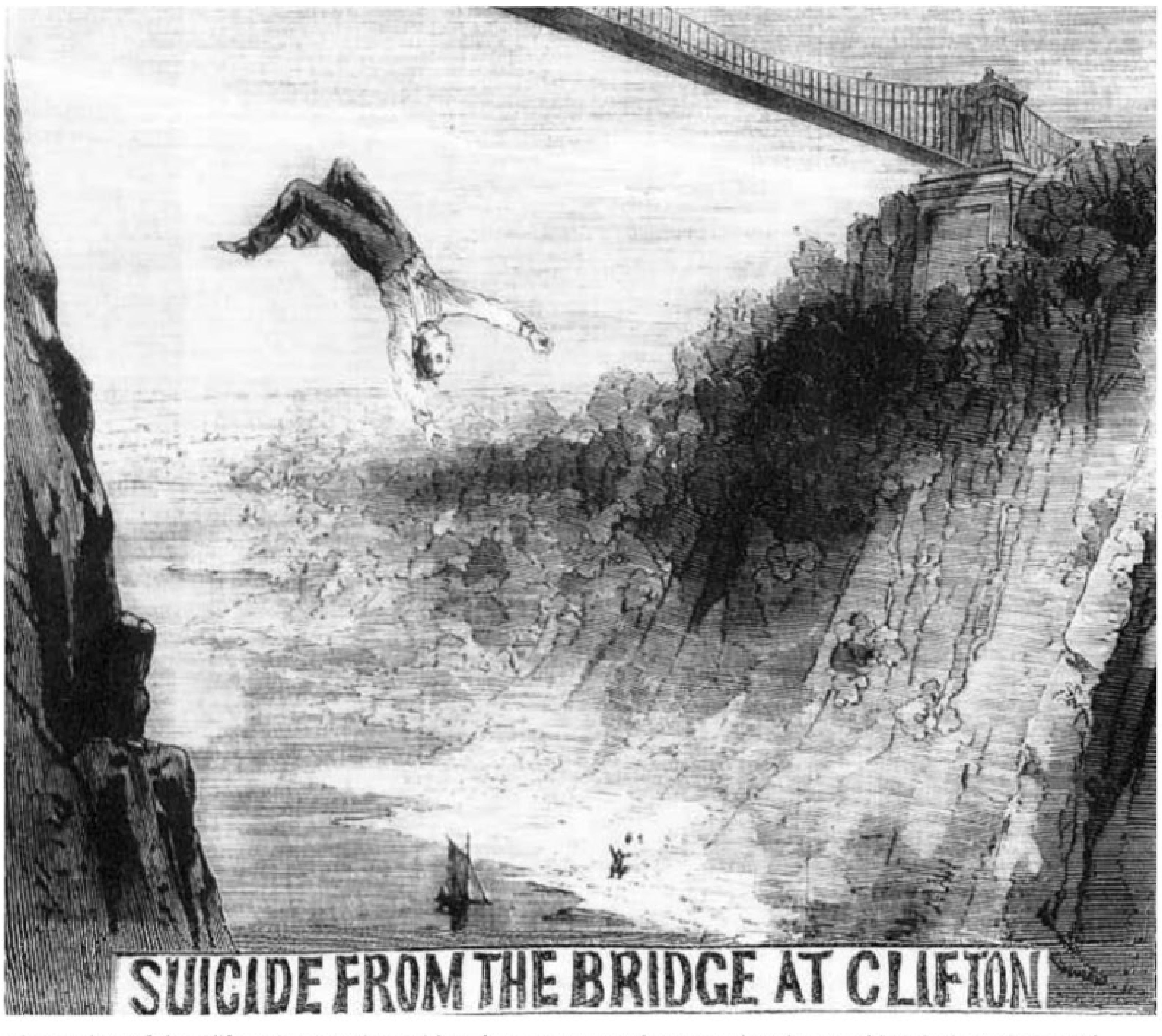
James Ess
Victoria, Australia.

Editor's note: For five further examples of people or vehicles seen twice in 'impossible' circumstances, see It Happened To Me! vol.1, 2008 (Fortean Times/Dennis Publishing), pp.70-74.

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

34. SUICIDE FROM THE CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE




SUICIDE FROM THE BRIDGE AT CLIFTON

TOP: A view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge, from a postcard stamped and posted in 1910. **ABOVE**: Joel Cousins falls to his death, from the *IPN*, 11 September 1869.

The Clifton Suspension Bridge, an architectural wonder designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was opened in 1864. The tall and impressive bridge, 245ft (75m) over the high water level of the River Avon, become one of the landmarks of Bristol, and it has kept that status to the present day.

The *Illustrated Police News* normally did not care much for bridges or architecture, but the Clifton Suspension Bridge made it onto its first page on 11 September 1869, when a young pastrycook named Joel Cousins had committed suicide by leaping off the bridge. He had paid his toll at the gate and proceeded to the middle of the bridge, where he took off his hat, coat and waistcoat, and leapt over the side. For a while, he held on to the rail of the bridge with both hands, but then let go, and there was a loud thud as he landed in the mud below. He was only 19 years old, and was presumed to have led a fast life and spent his money recklessly.

Joel Cousins was not the first man to commit suicide by jumping off the Clifton Suspension Bridge, however. His sole predecessor, the wealthy Portishead factory owner George Green, had taken his leap in May 1866, vaulting over the side of the bridge and landing in the muddy bank of the Avon below. In September 1870, an old coachman named George Bates leapt to his death from the bridge, and the following month, the young labourer William Henry Felling followed suit. In 1871, a young woman named Amelia Stone committed suicide by throwing herself off the bridge.

In August 1872, a well-dressed gentleman was observed to behave oddly in the Clifton area. When a police constable demanded his name and address, the gentleman introduced himself as Mr James Vinson of 35 Langton Street, Cathay. Mr Vinson proceeded to purchase a ticket to cross the Suspension Bridge, which he made use of at 10 that evening. Soon after he had disappeared in the dusk, there was a sound like the report of a pistol, caused by his body hitting the muddy bank of the Avon. There was insanity in Mr Vison's family, and his friends had for some time been fearful that he was losing his mind. In an illustrated account of Mr Vinson's sad fate, the *IPN* wrongly stated that he was the fourth person to commit suicide from the bridge; he was in fact the sixth, and by no

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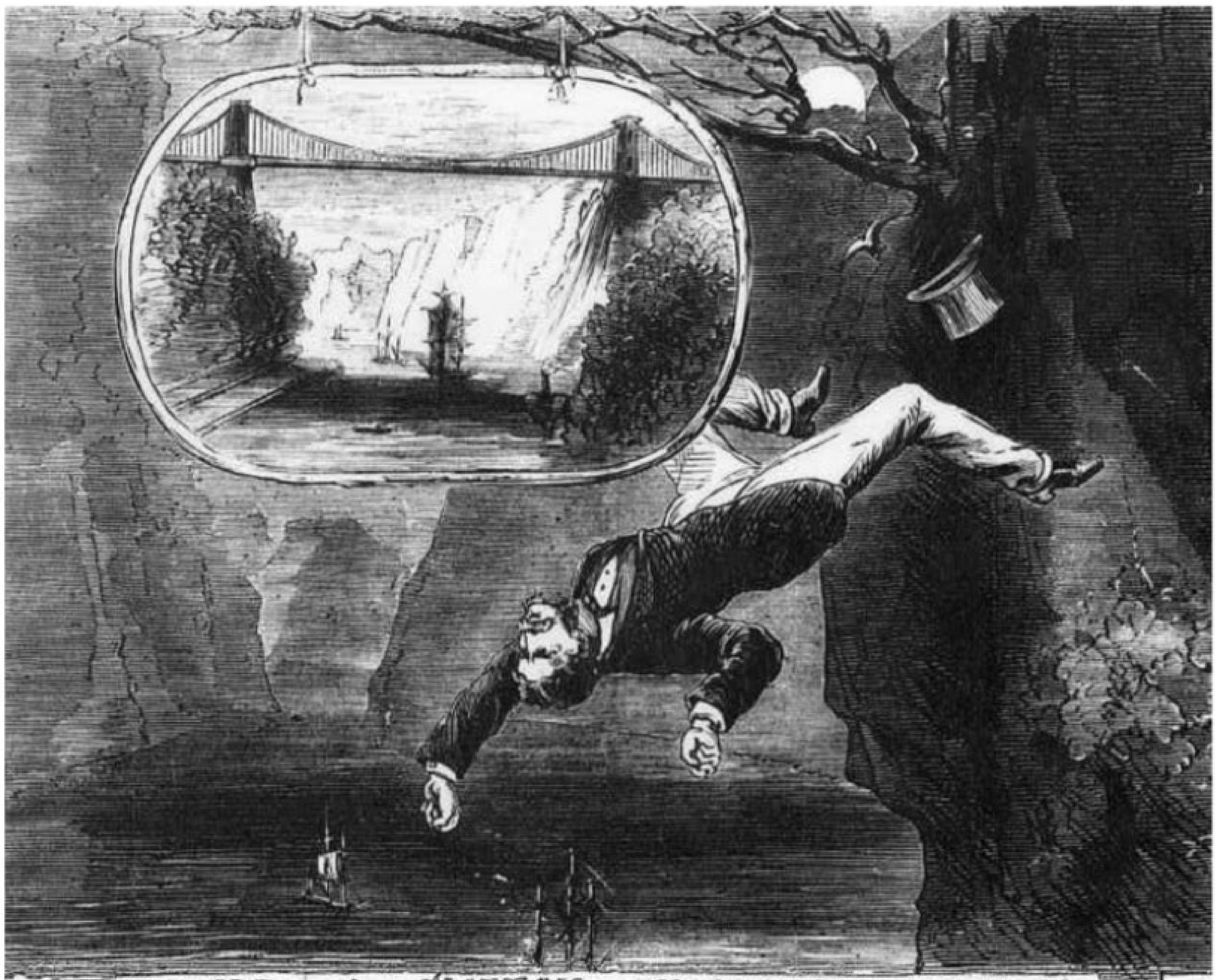
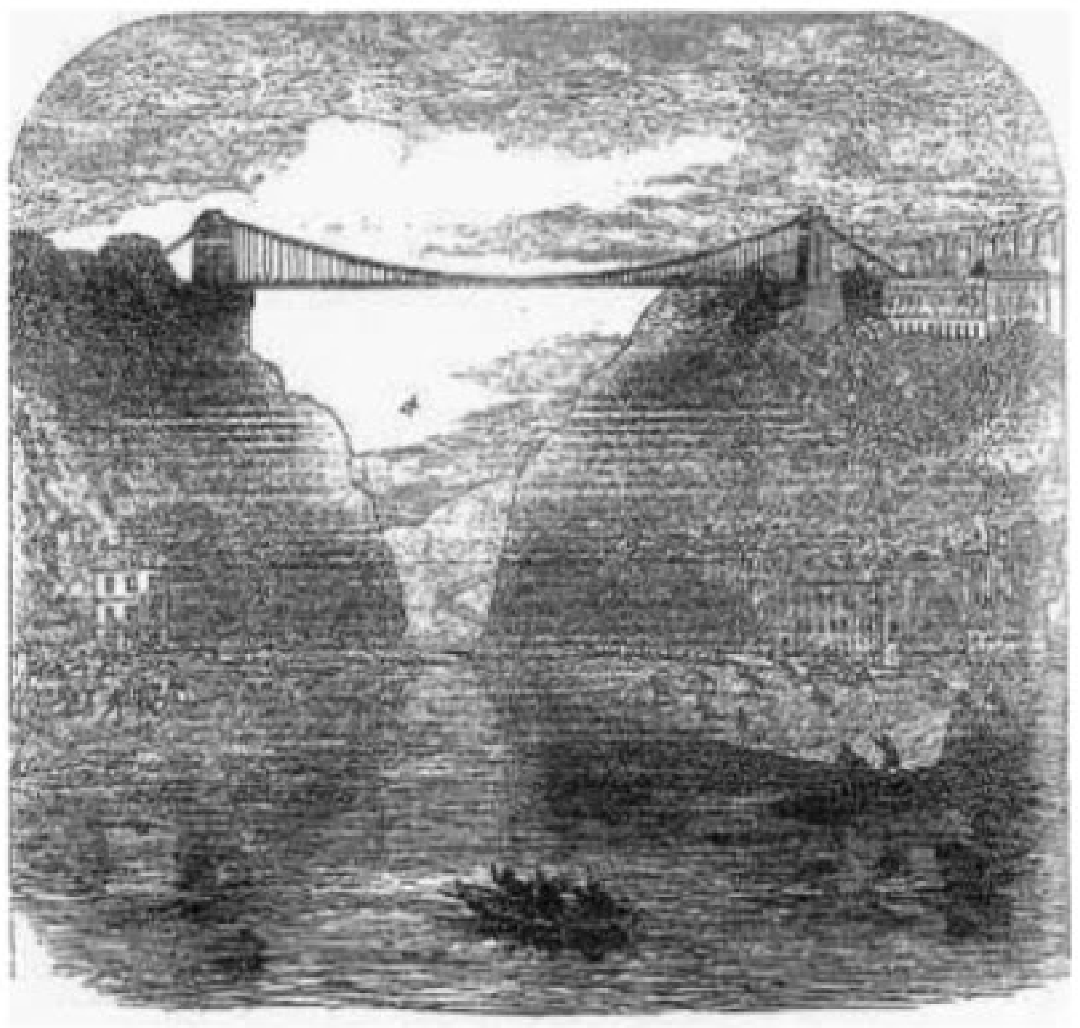


SUICIDE FROM THE CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE

LEFT: Mr James Vinson falls to his death, from the *IPN*, 17 Aug 1872. **BELOW**: The *IPN* failed to feature the suicide of George Green, the first ever from the Bridge, but the *Penny Illustrated Paper* of 19 May 1866 did not miss out on this opportunity, although its drawing was certainly no masterpiece.



means the last, as we will see.

Some light relief from this constant suicidal gloom was provided by 22-year-old barmaid Sarah Ann Henley, who leapt from the bridge in May 1885 after a tiff with her boyfriend. But it was a very blustery day, and the wind caught her voluminous skirts, slowing her descent very markedly. Still, she landed feet first on the soft bank of the Avon with such force that it took three workmen to dig her out of the mud. Amazingly, she had not suffered any broken bones, and the workmen took her to a railway tavern nearby for a much-needed glass of brandy. A doctor at the tavern recommended that she should be sent to the infirmary, and a cab was hailed. The driver refused to transport poor Sarah, however, since her clothes were so very dirty, and uttered the remarkable words: "I don't care! Let her die!"

Thus the workmen had to carry Sarah all the way to the Bristol Infirmary on a stretcher, a journey taking more than an hour. She remained in hospital for more than a week, being treated for severe shock and unspecified 'internal injuries'; these latter were not formidable enough to prevent her from making a complete recovery from her foolhardy adventure. Due to all the newspaper publicity, she received several offers of marriage, but turned them all down. The cruel cab driver defended his actions in a letter to the *Bristol Times & Mirror*, stating that he had only just had his cab cleaned, and did not want to get the seats dirty. He called for a fund to be set up to assist cabbies in these circumstances and pointed out that the corporation should have had an ambulance available for incidents like this. As for Sarah Ann Henley herself, she refrained from further rash acts, married the labourer Edward Lane in 1900, and lived to be 84 years old. The Bristol poet William E Heasell serenaded her in laborious verse:

> Once in Victoria's golden age
> When crinolines were all the rage
> A dame in fashionable attire
> Would change her life for one up higher
> So up to Clifton Bridge she went
> And made a parachute descent
> But though, 'twas not the lady's wish
> A boatman hooked her like a fish
> And thus a slave to fashion's laws
> Was snatched from out of Death's hungry
> jaws …

In August 1896, the *IPN* reported the suicide of the old tailor Thomas Smale from the Suspension Bridge, adding that he was the 33rd person to suffer this fate. The following month, there was further drama when a bankrupt Birmingham grocer named Charles Albert Browne threw two of his children, 12-year-old Ruby and three-year-old Elsie, headlong off the bridge. Amazingly, both girls survived this attempt to murder them, and Ruby was able to testify against her father in court. Browne was found guilty but insane and was committed to Broadmoor. Amazingly, he was released as early as 1899, apparently without making any further attempts to kill off his family.

The Clifton Suspension Bridge has remained one of the most notorious 'suicide bridges' in the world; the total death toll is said to exceed 400. According to a scholarly article, 127 people leapt or fell off the bridge between 1974 and 1993; the mortality rate among them was greater than 95 per cent. It was noted that the presence of the suspension bridge affected the local pattern of suicide very dramatically, and that local residents were twice as likely to commit suicide by jumping than inhabitants of the remainder of England and Wales. In December 1998, two tall wire barriers were erected on the bridge, and these halved the suicide rate from 8.2 to 4.0 per year, providing evidence in favour of the preventive role of 'suicide barriers' on tall bridges. Since many acts of suicide are impulsive in nature, restricting access to commonly used methods can reduce both method-specific and overall suicide rates.

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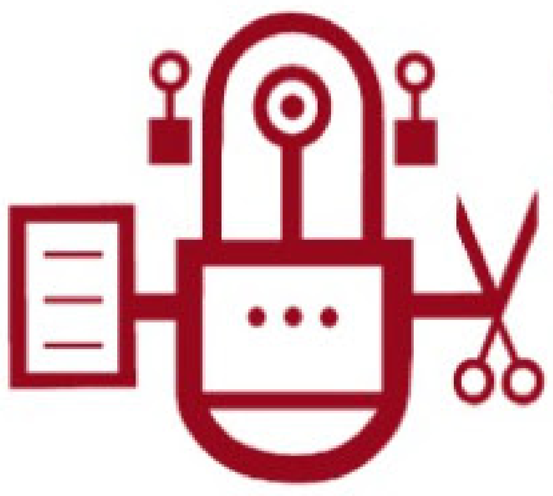

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To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 1 DEC 2014. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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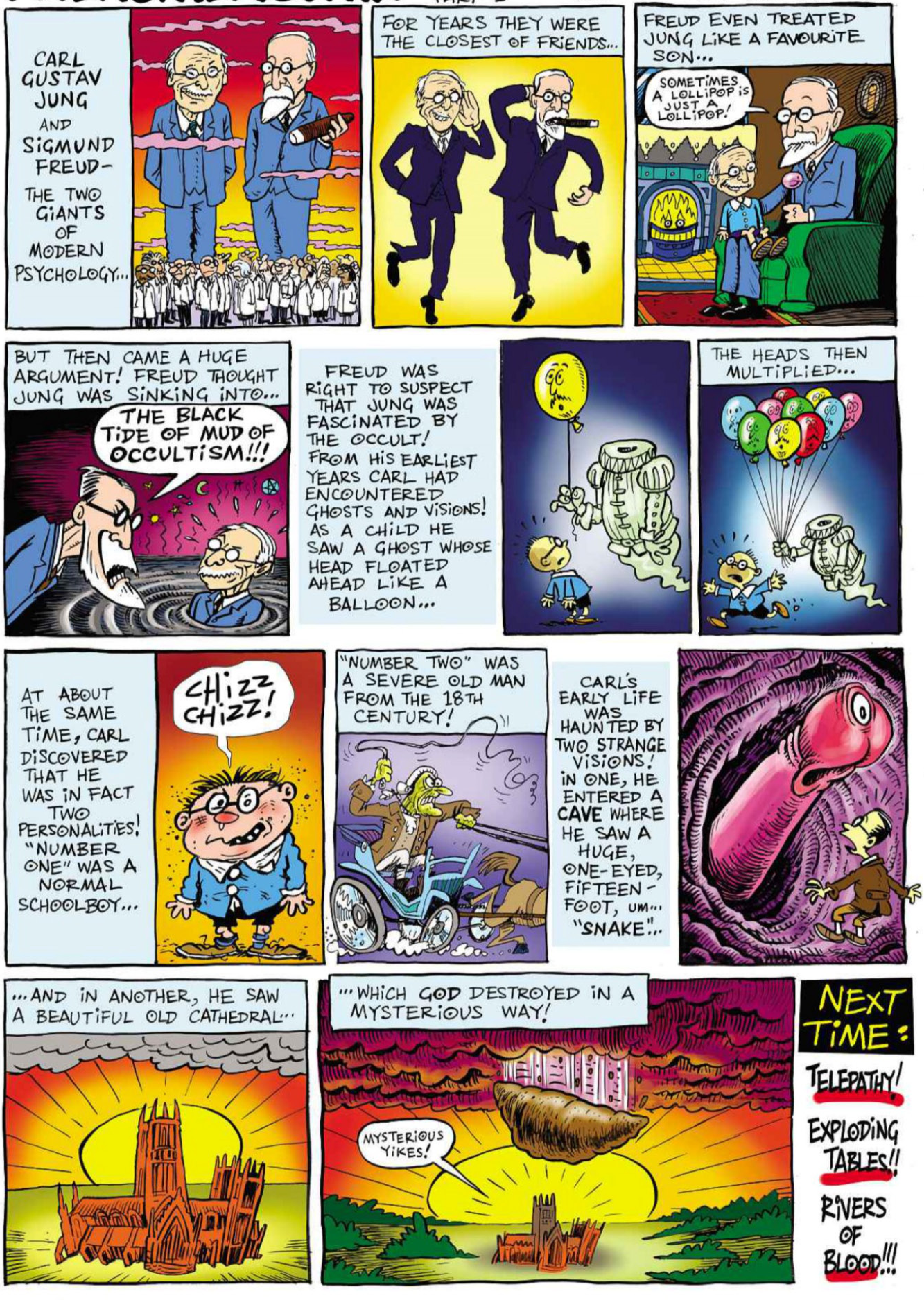
PHENOMENOMIX

CARL JUNG PART 1

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON


CARL GUSTAV JUNG AND SIGMUND FREUD– THE TWO GIANTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY...
FOR YEARS THEY WERE THE CLOSEST OF FRIENDS...
FREUD EVEN TREATED JUNG LIKE A FAVOURITE SON...
SOMETIMES A LOLLIPOP IS JUST A LOLLIPOP!
BUT THEN CAME A HUGE ARGUMENT! FREUD THOUGHT JUNG WAS SINKING INTO...
THE BLACK TIDE OF MUD OF OCCULTISM!!!
FREUD WAS RIGHT TO SUSPECT THAT JUNG WAS FASCINATED BY THE OCCULT! FROM HIS EARLIEST YEARS CARL HAD ENCOUNTERED GHOSTS AND VISIONS! AS A CHILD HE SAW A GHOST WHOSE HEAD FLOATED AHEAD LIKE A BALLOON...
THE HEADS THEN MULTIPLIED...
AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, CARL DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS IN FACT TWO PERSONALITIES! "NUMBER ONE" WAS A NORMAL SCHOOLBOY...
CHIZZ CHIZZ!
"NUMBER TWO" WAS A SEVERE OLD MAN FROM THE 18TH CENTURY!
CARL'S EARLY LIFE WAS HAUNTED BY TWO STRANGE VISIONS! IN ONE, HE ENTERED A CAVE WHERE HE SAW A HUGE, ONE-EYED, FIFTEEN-FOOT, UM... "SNAKE"...
...AND IN ANOTHER, HE SAW A BEAUTIFUL OLD CATHEDRAL...
...WHICH GOD DESTROYED IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY!
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FORTEAN TIMES 322

ON SALE 11 DEC 2014

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Sarah Bean, 34, died almost instantly when she was hit on the head by part of a gargoyle as she walked past the Second Presbyterian Church in the South Loop neighbourhood of Chicago around noon on 4 September. A piece of decorative metal had come loose from the building and knocked a chunk of stone from the gargoyle, three storeys up from the sidewalk. The church, built in 1874, was named a city landmark in 1977 and a National Historic Landmark in 2013. Ms Bean had been on the way to lunch with her fiancé, Lance Johnson, before starting work at a local children's hospital. The next day, again in Chicago, actress Molly Glynn was killed while cycling with her husband in Rogers Park when a tree branch fell and struck her on the head. *CBS Chicago, NY Daily News, 4 Sept; Independent, 6 Sept; copycateffect.blogspot.co.uk, 8 Sept 2014.*

A father who survived a crash when he lost control of his van was later killed by his wife when she went to the scene. The 54-year-old man and his daughter, 16, were unhurt when they crawled free from the wrecked van, which had rolled over several times before landing in a ditch in Carville, Normandy, just after 11pm on 2 October. The father then called his wife and asked her to come and pick them up. However, when she rushed to the scene, she lost control on the same sharp bend on a country road between Le Bény-Bocage and La Graverie. The car rolled, hitting the man and killing him instantly. The wife, 44, and daughter were taken to Vire hospital. *The Local, 3 Oct; Metro, 5 Oct 2014.*

Wanpen Inyai, a 65-year-old Thai woman from Bangkok, committed suicide on 12 September by jumping into a crocodile pit in a reptile farm near the capital city. CCTV footage showed her leaving her shoes on a walkway before jumping into the middle of a 10ft (3m) deep pond, which contained hundreds of adult crocodiles. Staff using long sticks tried in vain to prevent the reptiles from attacking her. Her sister said she was depressed and had not spoken to anyone for several days. This was the third known suicide-by-crocodile at the Samut Prakarn Crocodile Farm & Zoo, which claims to be the largest such facility in the world with about 100,000 crocodiles. The previous deaths had been in 1992 and 2002. The fences are just a few feet high to allow visitors, including children, to feed the crocodiles. Trainers also perform with the creatures, lying on top of them or thrusting their heads into their open jaws. *[AFP] Epoch Times, D.Telegraph, 17 Sept 2014.*

An unnamed African or Arabic man in his 20s dodged border controls in Calais and hid under a D&H Harrods Coach bound for England. He managed to cling to the undercarriage all the way back to the coach firm's base 150 miles (240km) away in Downham Market, Norfolk, on 24 July. However, he died from multiple injuries within seconds of emerging exhausted from his hiding place after the unsuspecting driver reversed. *D.Mirror, 26 July 2014.*

On 11 August 2013, Steven Oddy, 31, repeatedly threw his girlfriend against a very large plate glass window at the Banana Republic clothes store in Regent Street, London. Eventually the pane shattered, raining down deadly inch-thick fragments on him. One sliced through his left lung and pierced his liver, and he bled to death within minutes. His un-named 30-year-old girlfriend also suffered multiple cuts, but recovered. "When I got over to them, she was climbing out of the shop," said an eyewitness. "I could see the man had massive lacerations to the back of him. Parts of his internal organs were hanging out." *courtnewsuk.co.uk, –July 2014.*

Two farm workers, aged 27 and 30, were arrested on 19 August for pelting a fellow worker to death with oranges following an argument on a farm near the town of Tzaneen in northern South Africa. The victim had suffered no visible injury, indicating death as a result of blunt trauma; at the time of the report, police were awaiting the results of an autopsy. *Metro, 23 Aug 2014.*

A trainee doctor died of a heart attack while masturbating at a sperm bank. Zheng Gang, 23, was found after two hours in a booth at the building in Wuhan and was pronounced dead at the scene. It was his fourth visit to the sperm bank in just over a week. *MX News (Sydney), 15 Sept 2014.*

On 25 September, visitors and workers at a cemetery in Peraia, a small town south of Thessaloniki in northern Greece, along with a group of children playing outside, said they heard banging and muffled screaming coming from a woman's grave, about an hour after her funeral. They called the police and dug up the grave, but the 45-year-old woman was dead. Earlier that day, she had been declared dead by doctors treating her for cancer at a private clinic in Thessaloniki. "When the ambulance arrived, gravediggers were still throwing dirt off the grave. As soon as the body was exhumed, a cardiogram was conducted that confirmed the women was dead," said Chrissi Matsikoudi, the emergency services doctor who examined the corpse. "We did several tests including one for heart failure. It would have been impossible for someone in a state of rigor mortis to have been shouting and hitting the coffin like that." A coroner was expected to examine the body. Meanwhile, relatives of the dead woman said they were considering filing a complaint against the doctors responsible for her treatment at the cancer clinic. *BBC News, 26 Sept; Guardian, D.Telegraph, 27 Sept 2014.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

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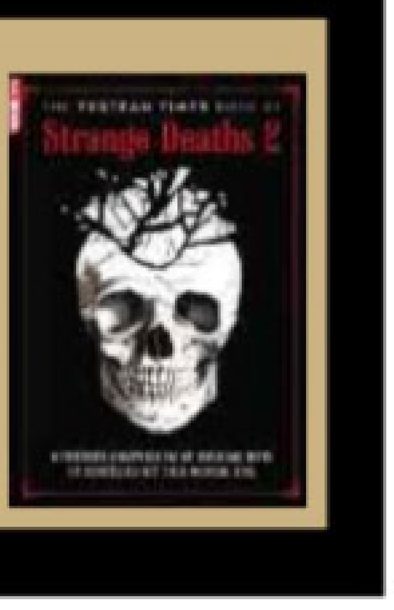

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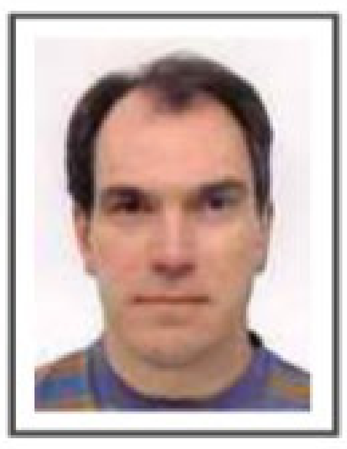

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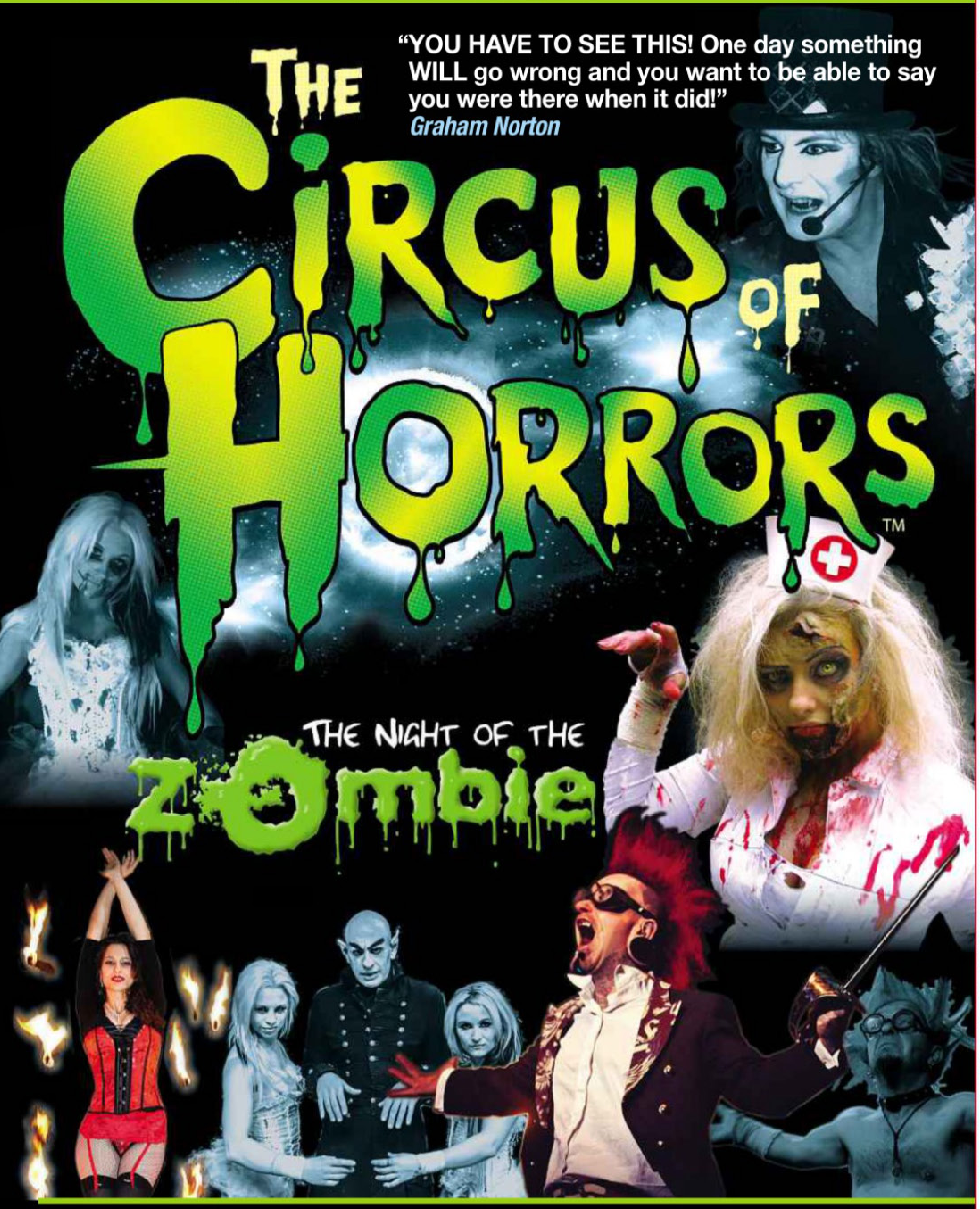

"YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS! One day something WILL go wrong and you want to be able to say you were there when it did!"
Graham Norton

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SEVENOAKS	The Stag	01732 450 175	19 NOV	stagsevenoaks.co.uk	T
FAREHAM	Ferneham Hall	01329 231 942	20 NOV	fernehamhall.co.uk	
EXMOUTH	Pavilion	01395 222 477	21 NOV	exmouthpavilion.co.uk	T
LONDON	Coronet Theatre	08444 993 666	23 NOV	ticketmaster.co.uk	T
BROXBOURNE	Civic Hall	01992 441 946	24 NOV	broxbourne.gov.uk/leisure	T
GLASGOW	King's Theatre	0844 871 7648	25 NOV	ambassadortickets.com/King's-Theatre	T
BRADFORD	St Georges Hall	01274 432 000	26 NOV	bradford-theatres.co.uk/st-georges-hall	T
CREWE	Lyceum Theatre	01270 368 242	27 NOV	crewelyceum.co.uk	T
NEWTOWN	Theatr Hafren	01686 614 555	28 NOV	theatrhafren.co.uk	T
LLANDUDNO	Venue cymru	01492 872 000	29 NOV	venuecymru.co.uk	T
BRIGHTON	Theatre Royal	08448 717 650	8 JAN 2015	ambassadortickets.com/brighton	T
POOLE	Lighthouse	0844 406 8666	9 JAN	lighthousepoole.co.uk	T
PAIGNTON	Palace Theatre	01803 665 800	10 JAN	palacetheatrepaignton.co.uk	
EXETER	Corn Exchange	01392 665 938	11 JAN	exeter.gov.uk/cornexchange	T
ANDOVER	Lights	01264 368 368	12 JAN	thelights.org.uk	
MILTON KEYNES	theatre	0844 871 7652	13 JAN	ambassadortickets.com/miltonkeynes	T
SWANSEA	Grand Theatre	01792 475 715	14 JAN	swansea.gov.uk/swanseagrandtheatre	T
YEOVIL	Octagon	01935 422 884	15 JAN	octagon-theatre.co.uk	
SOUTHEND	Cliffs Pavilion	01702 351135	16 JAN	thecliffspavilion.co.uk	T
BUXTON	Opera House	0845 127 2190	17 JAN	buxtonoperahouse.org.uk	
NEWARK	Palace Theatre	01636 655 755	18 JAN	palacenewark.com	
BRACKNELL	South Hill Park	01344 484 123	19 JAN	southhillpark.org.uk	
KETTERING	Lighthouse Theatre	01536 414 141	20 JAN	lighthousetheatre.co.uk	
HEREFORD	Courtyard Theatre	01432 340 555	21 JAN	courtyard.org.uk	T
STOKE	Victoria Hall	0844 871 7649	23 JAN	ambassadortickets.com/Victoria-Hall	T
WOLVERHAMPTON	Civic Theatre	08703 207 000	24 JAN	wolvescivic.co.uk	T
BILLINGHAM	Forum	01642 552 663	25 & 26 JAN	forumtheatrebillingham.co.uk	
GRIMSBY	Auditorium	0844 847 2426	28 JAN	grimsbyauditorium.org.uk	
SHEFFIELD	City Hall	01142 789 789	29 JAN	sheffieldcityhall.co.uk	T
NEWCASTLE	Grand Opera House	08444 993 666	30 JAN	ticketmaster.co.uk	T
AYR	Town Hall	01292 288 235	31 JAN	ayrgaiety.co.uk	
STIRLING	Albert Halls	01786 473 544	1 FEB	alberthalls.stirling.gov.uk	
MOTHERWELL	Concert Hall	01698 274 545	2 FEB	northlanarkshire.gov.uk/entertainment	
STRATHPEFFER	Pavilion	01997 420 124	4 FEB	strathpefferpavilion.org	
DUNDEE	Whitehall Theatre	01382 434 940	5 FEB	whitehalltheatre.com	
BARROW	Forum Theatre	01229 820 000	6 FEB	theforumbarrow.co.uk	
GREENOCK	Beacon	01475 723 723	7 FEB	beaconartscentre.co.uk	
FALKIRK	Town Hall	01334 506 850	8 FEB	ticketweb.co.uk	
LIVERPOOL	Empire Theatre	0844 871 3017	9 FEB	atgtickets.com/venues/liverpool-empire	
PRESTON	Guild Hall	0845 344 2012	10 FEB	prestonguildhall.com	
BARNSTAPLE	Queen's theatre	01271 324 242	11 FEB	northdevontheatres.org.uk/queens-theatre	T
BOURNEMOUTH	Pavilion	0844 576 3000	12 FEB	bic.co.uk	T
PLYMOUTH	Plymouth Pavilions	0845 146 1460	13 FEB	plymouthpavilions.com	T
SOUTHSEA	Kings Theatre	02392 828 282	14 FEB	kings-southsea.com	
BIRMINGHAM	Alexandra Theatre	0844 871 3011	16 FEB	alexandratheatre.org.uk	

T = TICKETS ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM
08444 993 666 ticketmaster.co.uk

CIRCUSOFHORRORS.CO.UK

SATAN BIZARRE BSH CLASSIC ROCK Le Maitre HAMMER SkinDeep

WARNING: The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts! The dangerous nature of our performances means individual acts may sometimes change